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## **Delving into young learners' attitudes and motivation to learn English: comparing the Armenian and the Greek classroom**

### **Εξετάζοντας τη στάση των μικρών μαθητών και τα κίνητρα εκμάθησης της αγγλικής γλώσσας: συγκρίνοντας τάξεις στην Αρμενία και την Ελλάδα**

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*This paper reports on the findings of a quantitative study conducted among the learners of the sixth grade in the Greek and the Armenian primary educational contexts. This comparative study aimed to unravel the young learners' attitude and motivation to learn English in two different foreign language contexts in order to construe the impact that the socio-educational context plays in their quest for learning English. The data gathering procedure was carried out with the help of a questionnaire that delved into the learners' attitudes and motivation to learn English in general and to establish whether the learners still feel adherent to native speaker norms or whether they show awareness and openness to English as an international language, in particular. The results reflect learners' highly diverse motivational orientation in the educational contexts of the two countries. On the one hand, Greek learners, in general, have more positive attitudes and a higher level of motivation, but, at the same time, exhibit more instrumental orientation, while, on the other hand, Armenian learners' attitudes are less positive, but, at the same time, these learners show a higher disposition to learn English for international communication and opportunities for knowledge growth, experience and job pursuit worldwide.*

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Στο άρθρο αυτό καταγράφονται τα ευρήματα μιας έρευνας με ποσοτικά κριτήρια που έγινε σε μαθητές της έκτης τάξης σε δημοτικό σχολείο της Ελλάδας και της Αρμενίας, στο συγκεκριμένο μαθησιακό περιβάλλον κάθε χώρας. Η συγκριτική αυτή έρευνα στόχευε στο να αποκαλύψει τη στάση και τα κίνητρα των μικρών μαθητών στην εκμάθηση της αγγλικής γλώσσας σε περιβάλλον εκμάθησης διαφορετικό στις δύο χώρες, ώστε να ερμηνευθεί η επίπτωση του κοινωνικο-εκπαιδευτικού περιβάλλοντος στην προσπάθεια εκμάθησης της αγγλικής γλώσσας. Η διαδικασία συλλογής των δεδομένων υλοποιήθηκε με τη μέθοδο της έρευνας ερωτηματολογίου, με τη βοήθεια της οποίας εξετάστηκαν η στάση και τα κίνητρα για την εκμάθηση της αγγλικής γλώσσας. Διερευνήθηκε επίσης κατά πόσον οι μαθητές

*προσχωρούν σε νόρμες μητρικής γλώσσας ή θεωρούν συνειδητά και ανοιχτά ότι η αγγλική αποτελεί διεθνή γλώσσα. Τα αποτελέσματα αντανακλούν πολύ διαφοροποιημένα κίνητρα και προσανατολισμούς στον αρμενικό και ελληνικό μαθησιακό περιβάλλον. Οι Έλληνες μαθητές επιδεικνύουν γενικά πιο θετική στάση και υψηλότερο επίπεδο κινήτρων, ενώ την ίδια στιγμή εκδηλώνουν περισσότερα κίνητρα επίτευξης στόχων. Από την άλλη πλευρά, οι Αρμένιοι μαθητές έχουν λιγότερο θετική στάση, ενώ ταυτόχρονα δείχνουν υψηλότερη διάθεση να μάθουν την αγγλική γλώσσα για διεθνή επικοινωνία και ευκαιρίες γνώσης, εμπειριών και εργασίας παγκοσμίως.*

**Key words:** young learners' attitudes and motivation; English as an International Language; EFL context

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## 0. Introduction

Language attitudes and language learning motivation are believed to be the main predictors of success and failure in language acquisition (Gardner, 1985). Throughout many decades, researchers have tried to explore language learning motivation and language attitudes by following different approaches such as socio-educational, situated, process oriented, from the self and identity perspective, and so on (to be discussed in 2.1.). Moreover, attitudes and motivation are not solid constructs and may differ from one context to another. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to establish to what extent two different educational contexts can influence learners' attitudes and motivation to learn English. More specifically, this study investigates the main differences in attitudes and motivation among the Greek and Armenian samples as well as looks into which type of attitudinal/motivational orientation is more dominant between the two groups of learners.

In recent times, together with the development of English into a language of international communication (to be discussed in 2.2), researchers have focused on the investigation of teachers' attitudes to teach English and learners' attitudes and motivation to learn English with respect to its current status. Since the notion of English as an international language (EIL) is a comparatively new concept, it opens up a new and unexplored research agenda where learners' attitudes and motivation to learn EIL are investigated. This consideration spurred our interest to unravel how the learners' attitudes are informed by among other things the awareness of EIL.

Therefore, it is expected that the findings will shed light to the following questions:

- What are Greek and Armenian sixth grade primary learners' attitudes towards English?
- What motivational orientations do Greek and Armenian sixth grade primary learners have?
- What is the impact of the socio-educational context on these learners' attitudes and motivation to learn English?

It is believed that this study will render important and insightful results due to the scarcity of studies conducted in different educational settings on young learners' attitudes and motivation in general and their interrelation with EIL, in particular.

## 1. Theoretical background of the study

### 1.1. L2 attitudes and motivation

In research tradition, the study of attitudes towards a specific language has a long history. The interest of researchers on attitudes towards a specific language is based on the reasons for favourability and unfavourability towards those languages. However, the more typical scope of research on attitudes to learn a specific language is on gender, age or background differences between groups of individuals. Attitudes towards the speakers of the language and their culture are researched in second and foreign language (SL and FL) contexts (e.g. Csizér & Dörnyei, 2005; Dörnyei & Clément, 2001; Gardner, 1985).

Two components of language attitudes have been identified: instrumental and integrative (Gardner & Lambert, 1972). An instrumental attitude to a language is mostly self-oriented and individualistic and would seem to have conceptual overlap with the need for achievement (McClelland, 1987). Instrumental attitudes to learning a second language or preserving a minority language might be attributed to vocational reasons, status, achievement, personal success, self enhancement, self-actualization or basic security or survival. On the other hand, integrative attitudes towards a particular language are generally of social and interpersonal character. Such an attitude is conceptually associated with the desire for membership. It has been defined by Gardner and Lambert (1972, p. 14) as “a desire to be like representative members of the other language community”.

Research on motivation in second/foreign language learning was initiated in Canada by the two Canadian psychologists Gardner and Lambert (1972) about four decades ago. The main constituent of Gardner’s motivational theory is the integrative motive as the most influential predictor of L2 acquisition. Gardner (1985, pp. 82-83) defines it as a “motivation to learn a second language because of positive feelings toward the community that speaks that language”. Instrumental motive is another component that affects L2 acquisition and is defined as a desire to learn the second/foreign language for pragmatic needs. The majority of studies conducted within the framework of Gardner’s Motivation Theory is situated in SL contexts or addresses those who study English as a Second Language.

Gardner and Lambert (1972) classify the various reasons for studying a second language and identify them as orientations, which can take two forms: integrative and instrumental. Integrative orientation refers to a desire to learn, understand, interact and even integrate with members of the target language community, whereas instrumental orientation, on the other hand, reflects practical concerns: professional and social promotion or desire to study in the country where the target language is spoken.

In the beginning of the 1990s, there was a strong call for expansion of motivation theories as many researchers maintained that the dominant L2 motivation theory proposed by Gardner (1985) was restrictive, since it provided a narrow perspective on motivation (Dörnyei, 1994; Crookes & Schmidt, 1991; Oxford & Shearin, 1994). Crookes and Schmidt (1991) suggested reopening the research agenda by including need-achievement concepts, expectancy-value ideas and attribution/self-efficacy constructs in an enlarged theory of L2 motivation. The beginning of the 21st century brought about new conceptualizations of L2 motivation, and the concept was reinterpreted in relation to the emergence of theories on self and identity.

Therefore, taking into account the recent trends of globalization and the development of English into an international language, researchers in the L2 motivation field (Coetzee Van Rooy, 2006; Dörnyei, 2005; Lamb, 2004; Yashima, 2000) have started to examine how the globalization phenomenon and the spread of English affect an individual's motivation to learn a foreign language in general and to learn English as a foreign language in particular. Many studies in FL contexts (Dörnyei, 1994; Kimura, Nakata & Okumura, 2001; Lamb, 2004) show that in the World English reality there is a blurring of integrative/instrumental motives, where learners develop a 'bicultural' identity, which, according to Lamb (Lamb, 2004), incorporates an English-speaking globally-involved version of themselves in addition to their local L1-speaking self.

Many studies in the field of language learning attitudes and motivation have delved into the examination of the relationship between age and motivation (Julkunen & Borzova, 1997; Nikolov, 2000), the relationship between language proficiency level and motivation (Lukmani, 1972; Spolsky, 1969; Yamashiro & McLaughlin, 2000), gender differences and motivation (Carr & Pauwels, 2006; MacIntyre et al., 2003), the socio-educational context of the study and motivation (Dörnyei, 1990; Gardner, 1988; Oxford & Shearin, 1994; Warden & Lin, 2000), and, most importantly, cross-sectional studies on learners' attitudes and motivation in different countries (Matsukawa & Tachibana, 1996 in Japan, China and Iran; Tachibana et al., 1996 in Japan and China; Taguchi et al., 2009 in Japan and China). In general, the results of the cross-sectional studies (Matsukawa & Tachibana, 1996; Tachibana et al., 1996) show that in different socio-educational contexts the learners develop diverse attitude/motivational trends, thus postulating that learners' attitudes and motivation are context/country specific.

Together with the emergence of EIL (discussed in 2.2), there arose a need to reconceptualize language attitudes and motivation particularly in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) contexts and to shed light to the learners' perceptions of and attitudes towards EIL and motivation to learn English as an international language.

## **1.2. EFL and the rise of EIL**

Traditionally, in EFL contexts, English is taught as a foreign language alongside other foreign languages, such as French, Spanish, German, Chinese, etc., and it is quite natural that English language teaching is mainly based on the native speaker models and cultures, thus, carrying native-speaker ideology. Language learning materials are native speaker (predominantly British or American) oriented as it is supposed to be in the case of foreign language instruction. To quote Graddol (2006, p. 81): "The learner is constructed as a linguistic tourist – allowed to visit, but without rights of residence and required always to respect the superior authority of native speakers."

The main issue at stake is the discussion of the appropriateness of basing English language teaching on native speaker norms in EFL contexts of different parts of the world, particularly when the learners have either limited or no contact with the native speakers or no desire to integrate into their society. Many scholars (Jenkins, 2000; McKay, 2002; Widdowson, 1998) question whether the learners need to learn English together with all the culturally laden elements that learning a FL entails, since, in most FL contexts, English is merely used for communication with other non-native speakers of English.

The development of English into an international language has been widely studied and the researchers (Crystal, 1997; Graddol, 2006; Jenkins, 2000; Kachru, 1992; McArthur, 1998; Smith, 1983; Widdowson, 1994) in the field acknowledge that English has so far surpassed its national borders and has become a language of wider international communication. Such an acknowledgement promoted the rise of EIL. McKay (2002) defines EIL as a language used by native speakers of English and bilingual users of English for cross-cultural communication. EIL can be used both in a local sense between speakers of diverse cultures and languages within one country and in a global sense between speakers from different countries. EIL is viewed as an alternative to “Standard English”, which provides a space where speakers can be culturally, politically and socially neutral (Modiano, 2001). Moreover, Modiano (1999) further asserts that EIL combines those features of English, which are easily understood by a broad cross-section of L1 and L2 speakers.

Those facets of EIL that have been researched pertain to such issues as language ownership (Brutt-Griffler & Samimy, 1999; Strevens, 1980; Widdowson, 1994), identity (Dröschel, Durham & Neukirchen, 2002; Meierkord, 2002), standards (Quirk, 1985; Kachru, 1985) and the relationship between EIL and ELT (Alpetkin, 2002; Matsuda & Friederich, 2011; McKay, 2002; Sridhar & Sridhar, 1992). Research on learners’ attitudes towards EIL has been initiated, especially in EFL contexts in an attempt to establish to what extent the learners are familiar with the current status of English and whether they are willing to incorporate some EIL features in their English language learning by being introduced to different varieties of English (Decke-Cornill, 2003; Matsuda, 2003; Sifakis & Sougari, 2003, 2005; Timmis, 2002; Young & Walsh, 2010).

In the Greek educational context, Sifakis and Sougari have investigated the views and attitudes towards EIL that are held by Greek teachers of English; some topics that have been examined are the following: beliefs about and attitudes towards their pronunciation (Sifakis & Sougari, 2005), ownership of English (Sifakis & Sougari, 2005), learners’ motivation (Sougari & Sifakis, 2006), and the like. Their studies provide an informative insight into teachers’ EIL-related beliefs and attitudes in the Greek educational context. Moreover, Nikolaou (2004) investigated Greek high school learners’ attitudes and motivation. What is more, in his study, Nikolaou indirectly refers to EIL as an emerging paradigm. In contrast, no studies related to EIL have been traced in the Armenian educational context, which would at least implicitly try to look into the learners and/or teachers beliefs about, attitudes and/or motivation to learn EIL. Several studies (Arakelyan, 2007; Hakobjanyan, 2009; Grigoryan-Nikolai, 2009) conducted within the framework of a Masters in Teaching English as a Foreign Language programme at the American University of Armenia have investigated learners’ attitudes and motivation to learn English as a FL but there seems to be no interrelation with EIL.

The present study, therefore, investigates young learners’ attitudes and motivation to learn English and seeks to unravel whether there is an interrelation between the learners’ motivation to learn English and their acknowledgment and perception of EIL in the two (i.e. Greek and Armenian) different educational contexts within the EFL domain.

## 2. Method

### 2.1. The Context: EFL in Greece and Armenia

In the case of the Greek educational context, English is highly promoted in every facet of everyday and business life, on television and radio broadcasting. What is more, English is advocated on the governmental and educational levels, since English has been chosen as a default foreign language of instruction taught from the third grade onwards in Greek primary education in state schools and is taught for three hours per week from grade 3 up to grade 6. According to the curriculum of teaching modern foreign languages (Government Gazette, 2003), the main objective is to develop *Foreign Language Literacy*, *Multilingualism* and *Multiculturalism*, which are regarded as the three core content guiding principles in teaching modern foreign languages.

What is more, a new *Unified curriculum for foreign languages* has been introduced within a new educational framework known as “New School (School of the 21st Century)” for a selective number of schools throughout the country. Furthermore, a new programme entitled *New foreign language education policies in schools: learning English in early childhood* (implemented within the National Strategic Reference Framework 2007-2013) has recently been launched; in the schools which follow this programme, special emphasis is placed on the first and second grades of primary school, where the teaching of English is introduced for the first time. With regard to the time allocation of English instruction in the schools that follow the new programme, English is taught for two hours per week in the first and the second grades and for four hours per week from the third grade onwards up to the sixth grade. It is worthwhile mentioning that tuition in English is also sought outside the school system and the majority of students attend such classes in foreign language centres.

Such a popularity of English and its prevalence in the Greek community are achieved due to several factors: the membership of Greece in the European Union and many other international organizations and the highly developed international relations of Greece in the spheres of economy, politics, culture and education. Needless to mention that English plays a key role in the participation of Greece in international organizations and affairs. It can be deduced, therefore, that the Greek socio-educational context provides opportunities for communication with the wider international community involving speakers of diverse L1 backgrounds.

On the other hand, the Armenian socio-educational context presents quite a different picture. The language policy suggests the instruction of three foreign languages (Russian and choice among English, French or German) so as to develop the learners’ communicative and cooperative skills (Zolyan et al., 2008). English is taught from the third grade of the Primary School for two hours per week in state schools, while the language teaching methodology follows rather traditional practices. English language instruction is geared towards the native speaker model, entailing native-speaker cultural elements, ideology, etc. According to the national curriculum of foreign language instruction in general education which is available only in Armenian, (Syllabus of the subject “English” for general secondary education (grades 3-9), 2010), the learners should develop a deep knowledge about the countries where the target FL (i.e. English) is a mother tongue (i.e. countries, such as UK, USA, Australia), including the target countries’ culture, geography, customs and holidays, history, famous people, and so on. Due to English being a compulsory subject for University entry exams, private tuition is widely popular especially among the high school learners who wish to



pursue studies at University level. In contrast with Greece, foreign language centres are not very popular in Armenia, which mostly provide English tuition for adults (Zolyan et al., 2008).

Notwithstanding the fact that Armenia is a member state of many international organizations, such as the United Nations, the Council of Europe, the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), etc. due to its geo-political situation, Armenia does not participate in international affairs and organizations on equal terms with Greece and other developed countries. The sphere of international relations of Armenia is limited to the CIS, i.e. to countries where English does not function as a working language of communication. Besides, English is not promoted on the social level either, and, therefore, the learners and the members of the wider Armenian community, in general, do not have access to and contact with English on a daily basis. From the above discussion, it flows that the Armenian socio-educational context presents a typical EFL-biased milieu where EIL has no real function.

Therefore, the two contexts under investigation, that is, both the Greek and Armenian educational contexts belong to Kachru's Expanding Circle countries (Kachru, 1982), where English is taught as a foreign language. It becomes however apparent that the Greek socio-educational context provides more opportunities to come into contact with English outside the language classrooms in everyday life; in contrast, in the Armenian socio-educational context, English language learning and use are limited to the in-class activities. It is believed, consequently, that, in such different settings, learners will manifest quite distinct attitude and motivational patterns.

## **2.2. Participants**

A questionnaire was administered to 107 learners (Armenia, N=52 and Greece, N=55) in comparable settings in terms of socio-educational and socio-economic level, age and proficiency level. To be more specific, the learners of the sixth grade of a state primary school in Thessaloniki (population of 1,006,730 citizens), Greece and the learners of the same grade in Yerevan (population of 1,121,900 citizens), Armenia were selected. One school per city was chosen and all the sixth-graders within those schools were surveyed. Both schools were situated in working-class districts: in the Western part of Thessaloniki in the case of Greece and in the South-Western part of the capital of Armenia – Yerevan. The cluster sampling method<sup>1</sup> was chosen, which means that the two schools were judgmentally selected as clusters and all the sixth graders within those clusters were surveyed. The only difference that should be underlined in relation to the two settings is that in the case of Greece, Western Thessaloniki, though being populated mainly by working-class citizens of Greek origin, can be characterized as having an emigrant, multicultural population as well, while in Armenia, the population is homogeneous, consisting of 95% Armenians and, consequentially, South-Western Yerevan is inhabited by working-class Armenians.

## **2.3. Survey instruments, Administration and Analysis**

The questionnaire that delved into the young learners' attitudes and motivation was devised in Greek, pilot tested among 20 sixth graders and later translated into Armenian in order to suit the purposes of the present study. The format of the questionnaire made use of a five point Likert type scale, which ranged from *strongly agree (1)* to *strongly disagree (5)*. The first subscale in the questionnaire looked into the learners' attitudes towards English (11 items) (rendering a Chronbach's Alpha<sup>2</sup> = .806 for Armenia and .603 for Greece); the second subscale examined the learners' motivation to learn English (15 items) (rendering a

Chronbach's Alpha = .771 for Armenia and .678 for Greece) and the final section asked the respondents to provide their bio data.

The learners' proficiency level was measured with the help of the Oxford Quick Placement Test<sup>3</sup> (QPT), which was completed by the learners immediately after administering the questionnaires. The learners were given one hour to complete the questionnaire and the QPT. The questionnaires and placement tests were anonymous and no teacher or other member of the school staff had access to the questionnaires or the QPT results.

The data was processed using the PASW 18<sup>4</sup> (Predictive Analytics Software) software. The Chi-square crosstab<sup>5</sup> procedure was implemented for determining differences in the learners' profiles across the two samples. The Mann-Whitney U<sup>6</sup> non-parametric test of independent samples was chosen to compare the mean ranks of the two samples as well as to identify statistically significant differences between the Greek and Armenian learners. The significance level was set at  $p < .05$ .

### 3. Results

#### 3.1. Learners' profiles

As already mentioned, the overall number of the respondents is 107 (Armenia, N=52 and Greece, N=55), while 52.3% were females and 47.7% were males (see Table 1).

		Country				Total			
		Armenia		Greece		N		%	
		N	%	N	%				
Gender	Boy	22	42.3	29	52.7	51	47.7		
	Girl	30	57.7	26	47.3	56	52.3		
Total		52	100	55	100	107	100		

Table 1. The distribution of respondents in terms of country and gender

The mean age of the respondents was 12 years. Statistical analysis was performed to examine and to establish statistically significant differences between the two groups of learners in terms of certain aspects of their profile and attitude and motivational patterns. A significant difference was observed between the two samples with regard to the question where they initially started learning English: the chi-square crosstabs procedure was applied to see whether there was a significant difference between the Greek and Armenian samples. The results showed that the Greek sample differed significantly in terms of the place of FL learning onset ( $N=107$ ,  $\chi^2(2)=49.215$ ,  $p<.001$ ). Therefore, 63.6% of the Greek sample started learning English in a private FL school, whereas 96.2% of the Armenian sample started learning English at the state school.



Moreover, a significant difference ( $N=107$ ,  $\chi^2(1) = 59.796$ ,  $p<.001$ ) was also observed in the respondents' current attendance at a private foreign language centre: 80.0% of the Greek sample attended classes at such a centre, whereas only 5.8% of the Armenian sample did so. Nevertheless, in the case of private tuition, the Armenian sample shows a significant difference: 50% of the Armenian respondents attended private English language lessons, whereas only 18.2% of the Greek respondents did so.

With regard to the proficiency level (following the classifications outlined by the Common European Framework of Reference for Language learning (Council of Europe, 2001)), the QPT results rendered that 50.5% of the whole sample was at level A1, 43.0% was at level A2 and only 6.5% of the learners was at level B1<sup>7</sup>. As can be seen in Table 2, the learners' proficiency level corresponds to the set standards (A2) for a great number of respondents (43.0%), while most of the learners' level (50.5%) corresponds to A1 level. What is more, no statistically significant differences ( $N=107$ ,  $\chi^2(2)=.916a$ ,  $p=.633$ ) were observed between the two cohorts, which entails that the language proficiency level is not a dominant factor that affects learners' attitudes and motivation.

QPT RESULTS	Country				TOTAL	
	Armenia		Greece			
	N	%	N	%	N	%
A1	28	53.8	26	47.3	54	50.5
A2	20	38.5	26	47.3	46	43.0
B1	4	7.7	3	6.5	7	6.5
Total	52	100	55	100	107	100

Table 2. QPT results across the two samples

### 3.2. Learners' attitudes towards English

The Mann-Whitney U-test results (see Table 3) yielded that the attitudes towards English are generally more positive for the Greek sample. The mean score for the Greek sample is considerably lower (which indicates that the attitudes are more positive) for all the items except for one. The data rendered statistically significant results with regard to the following issues: the importance of English for computer use; the knowledge of English rendering them more educated; the importance of having an English language proficiency certificate for future success; the majority of films and songs they like are in English; and their belief that English is an easy language to learn; the acknowledgment of English as a basic language of communication with people from different linguistic backgrounds. The acknowledgment of the role of English as a means of international communication in particular and the preference for films and songs in English as explicitly stated denote that the Greek sample shows a higher degree of EIL-related awareness.

In the cases where significant differences emerged across the two samples, the Greek cohort was more positively predisposed towards the need for and the importance of English in their everyday life. Moreover, the results reflect that the attitudes towards English were on the whole positive across the two groups except for the disagreement that English is an easy language to learn and that the widespread use of English affects their mother tongue. However, there is also some agreement in certain items such as the learners' shared belief

that English is indispensable for internet and gaming, as well for making friends internationally; what is more, both the learners and their parents across the two cohorts attribute great importance in having good knowledge of English for their children's future success in life.

### 3.3. Learners' motivation to learn English

With particular reference to the questionnaire items related to motivation, the respondents were asked to state the reasons for learning English. The Mann-Whitney U test results yielded that the Armenian and Greek samples exhibited quite different motivational patterns (see Table 4). To be more specific, the Greek sample demonstrated a greater desire to learn English for pragmatic needs in the case of statements such as Item 1 'English will be very useful in whatever profession I choose in the future' and Item 3 'I want to attain an English language proficiency certificate'; moreover, other factors that raise the Greek learners' motivation are external pressure, obligation (Item 6 'English is a compulsory school subject') and personal enjoyment and sense of association with common trends (Item 7 'I like the English language' and Item 8 'My friends and classmates learn English').

	Attitudes towards English	Country	MW U test			
			M*	MR**	U	p
1	The knowledge of English is indispensable for computer use	Armenia Greece	1.85 1.42	65.70 42.94	821.500	<b>.000</b>
2	English is indispensable for internet use and gaming	Armenia Greece	1.85 1.73	58.13 50.09	1215.000	ns
3	The knowledge of English will help me make friends with people from other countries	Armenia Greece	1.71 1.75	56.80 51.35	1284.500	ns
4	The knowledge of English will make me more educated	Armenia Greece	1.75 1.47	61.86 46.57	1021.500	<b>.004</b>
5	English is the basic language of communication with people from other countries	Armenia Greece	1.83 1.60	61.56 46.85	1037.000	<b>.007</b>
6	If I know English well I will be more successful in life	Armenia Greece	1.90 1.89	56.96 51.20	1276.000	ns
7	I believe if I have any English language certificate I will be more successful in the future	Armenia Greece	1.96 1.69	61.38 47.02	1046.000	<b>.010</b>
8	My parents believe that the knowledge of English is very important for my future	Armenia Greece	1.75 1.60	58.18 50.05	1212.500	ns
9	The majority of films and songs that I like are in English	Armenia Greece	2.20 1.80	60.39 47.11	1051.000	<b>.018</b>
10	The widespread use of English in Greece affects my mother tongue	Armenia Greece	3.43 3.47	50.42 56.35	1245.500	ns
11	English is an easy language to learn	Armenia Greece	3.06 2.42	61.94 46.49	1017.000	<b>.008</b>

M\* = Mean, M\*\* = Mean Rank

Table 3. Learners' attitudes towards English

	I learn English because.....	Country	MW U test			
			M*	MR**	U	p
1	English will be very useful in whatever profession I choose in the future	Armenia Greece	1.88 1.45	66.65 42.98	824.000	<b>.000</b>
2	I want to study abroad (e.g. UK, USA, etc.)	Armenia Greece	2.37 2.40	55.10 52.96	1373.000	ns
3	I want to attain an English language proficiency certificate	Armenia Greece	2.44 1.58	68.69 40.11	666.000	<b>.000</b>
4	I will learn through English more things about native speakers (e.g. Americans, British, etc.), their customs and way of living	Armenia Greece	2.12 2.58	50.53 57.45	1240.000	ns
5	I will learn through English more things about nonnative speakers (e.g. German, Japanese, etc.), their customs and way of living	Armenia Greece	2.19 2.76	46.87 60.75	1059.000	<b>.015</b>
6	English is a compulsory school subject	Armenia Greece	2.75 1.87	65.75 42.89	819.000	<b>.000</b>
7	I like the English language	Armenia Greece	2.52 2.16	62.36 46.10	995.500	<b>.004</b>
8	My friends and classmates learn English	Armenia Greece	2.83 2.09	64.41 44.15	888.500	<b>.001</b>
9	It is my parents' wish	Armenia Greece	1.33 2.55	40.39 66.86	722.500	<b>.000</b>
10	I want to travel to native speaking countries (e.g. UK, USA, Australia, etc.)	Armenia Greece	1.62 1.93	55.87 54.13	1423.000	ns
11	I want to travel to nonnative speaking countries (e.g. Japan, Germany, Spain, etc.)	Armenia Greece	1.63 2.11	49.84 57.94	1213.500	ns
12	I realize the important role of English in the world today	Armenia Greece	1.88 1.69	58.71 49.55	1185.000	ns
13	I want to communicate with native speakers of English (e.g. Americans, British, etc.)	Armenia Greece	1.67 2.22	46.17 61.40	1023.000	<b>.007</b>
14	I want to communicate with nonnative speakers of English (e.g. Spanish, German, Japanese, etc.)	Armenia Greece	1.67 2.24	45.54 62.00	990.000	<b>.004</b>
15	I want to browse the internet	Armenia Greece	1.77 2.13	51.15 56.69	1282.000	ns

M\*= Mean, M\*\*= Mean Rank

Table 4. Learners' motivation to learn English in the Armenian and Greek contexts

On the other hand, the Armenian sample manifested a higher motivation to learn English in relation to such issues as an interest in attaining knowledge about people from various nationalities (Item 5 'I will learn through English more things about nonnative speakers of English, their customs and ways of living'); communication (Item 13 'I want to communicate

with native speakers of English' and Item 14 'I want to communicate with nonnative speakers of English'); and parental influence (Item 9 'It is my parents' wish'). The Armenian sample showed that their motivational orientation can, in a broader sense, be characterized as integrative, because the inner drives for learning English among the Armenian learners have to do with the desire to travel, to communicate both with native speakers as well as with people from other countries and to learn about the cultures of different countries.

#### 4. Discussion

In the present study, the focus was on investigating the learners' attitudes and motivation to learn English in two quite distinct socio-educational contexts: those of Armenia and Greece. The results rendered that in terms of English language proficiency level and English language learning experience, the learners of both groups show a high rate of resemblance and homogeneity. Nevertheless, the number of those who started learning English at a private FL school as well as those who attended a private FL school is much greater in the Greek sample. Such a result was anticipated, because, in contrast with the great popularity of foreign language centres in Greece, such schools are not popular in Armenia. As already mentioned, apart from learning English at school, private tutoring is favoured, which is quite popular and inexpensive (in contrast to Greece) in Armenia, and thus many parents engage their children in private tuition provided by non-native speaker teachers of English. This is the reason that in the case of receiving private English tuition, the Armenian sample prevails considerably.

The analysis of the young learners' attitudes towards English across the two samples showed that the learners across the two groups exhibit positive attitudes towards English, which is in line with the findings of other studies, that young learners hold more positive attitudes towards the target language in comparison with older learners (Nikolov, 2000). The high appreciation of films and songs in English as well as the belief that English is an easy language to learn among Greek learners verifies whatever has been outlined about the two educational contexts (see 3.1), where in the case of Greece, the learners have a greater exposure to English due to the socio-educational context, thus resulting in their positive attitudes towards the language and English-based media. Such positive attitudes towards English and general acknowledgement of the international role of English is also observed in other studies conducted on learners' attitudes towards EIL (Friedrich, 2000; Matsuda, 2003).

A closer look into the learners' motivation across the two groups highlights the general motivational profiles of the respondents. As has been depicted in the results, Greek learners reported having more pragmatic reasons for learning English and related their future career success to the knowledge of English and most importantly to being a holder of a language proficiency certificate in English. Factors such as societal pressure, parental influence and expectations and peer pressure can contribute to the Greek learners' attendance of additional instruction in English and the learners' struggle for the attainment of proficiency certificates. In Greek society, the language proficiency certificate is a prerequisite and a key that opens up many job opportunities. A quick glance at job vacancy announcements in a Greek newspaper will reveal that the vast majority of announcements require a certified knowledge of English.

In Armenia, on the other hand, though the knowledge of English is a prerequisite for many job positions and an extra advantage in general, language certification is not that popular and well-established as it is in Greece. The intentions of those who sit the IELTS exams

organized by the British Council in Armenia are either to study or live abroad. Therefore, applicants who wish to pursue post-graduate studies at the American University of Armenia are expected to sit an institutionalized TOEFL exam.

It is also noteworthy to underline the fact that the Greek sample exhibits a higher level of awareness of the role of English as a basic language of communication with people from different countries as well as their belief that the knowledge of English will make them more educated, which implicitly portrays that the Greek respondents do not view English as a mere foreign language, but as a tool of acquiring universal knowledge and becoming generally more educated. Nonetheless, Armenian learners also acknowledge that the knowledge of English will help them make friends with young people who do not share their mother tongue, but it is believed that this is not so much attributed to their awareness of the international role of English but rather to their recent experience of using English and making new friends on social sites such as the Facebook. Such an acknowledgment, however, can be considered a tiny step towards the development of their perception of the role of English as an international language.

Moreover, there is a tendency among Greek learners to view English as a means of widening their general outlook. Such motivational orientations as travel and communication do not emerge as the main drives that spur the Greek learners' motivation to learn English. In other words, the Greek learners' motivational orientations can be characterized as instrumental, which appears in other studies in FL contexts as well (Dörnyei, 1990; Oxford & Shearin, 1994; Warden & Lin, 2000; Dörnyei, 2005).

On the other hand, the Armenian sample demonstrates a higher level of motivation to learn English for reasons such as travel, communication and interest in different cultures. Such a motivation can, in a broader sense, be called "integrative", as it entails such motives as travel, communication and cultural interest. Of course, it should be emphasized that the term *integrative motivation* is not used in its classical Gardnerian sense; it can rather be defined as the desire to integrate into the global community, with no particular reference group (McClelland, 2000). Moreover, it seems that the lack of exposure to English on a daily basis outside the formal educational context develops a desire to travel and to communicate with native and non-native speakers of English. Besides, the existence of the integrative motive among the Armenian learners can be explained by the socio-economic situation in Armenia; the migration rate is very high and the majority of Armenians wish to migrate to another country (predominantly to countries such as the United States of America, Canada, Germany, Holland, Belgium, etc.) in search of a better job and a better life. This could explain the Armenian learners' desire to learn English mainly for travel and communication purposes. Thus, many young learners envision their future elsewhere and, therefore, are psychologically prepared to migrate. This is the reason why many parents want their children to learn English, notwithstanding their financial state and difficulties. It becomes apparent that they need to know English as a means of international communication, since it will open up better job opportunities and promote mutual understanding, construction of social identity and establishment of relations within the new society.

In synopsis, as depicted in other cross-educational studies (Matsukawa & Tachibana, 1996; Tachibana et al., 1996), it becomes quite clear that the socio-educational context is responsible for designating the young learners' attitudes and motivation to learn English. With regard to the Armenian and Greek learners, distinct patterns of motivational orientation emerge; Greek learners are motivated to learn English predominantly for *internal* use (within their country and society) to satisfy their everyday pragmatic needs,

thus manifesting instrumental motivational orientation, while Armenians envision their future use of English outside their country, i.e. for *external* use initially, in order to settle down and integrate into a new society, thus manifesting integrative motivational orientation.

Such assumptions, of course, need an ethnographic enquiry and confirmation, a thing that would shed light and provide a deeper insight into the learners' attitudes and motivation. The lack of an ethnographic enquiry is not, of course, the only limitation of this study. It is believed that a larger number of respondents both from Greece and Armenia would allow to make a deeper analysis of the respondents' attitudes and motivation and to state that the results could be generalizable of the whole population. Nevertheless, the results of the study were quite informative and provided an insight into the learners' attitudes and motivation to learn English in two different socio-educational contexts and led to reasonable conclusions.

## 5. Conclusion

The results of the present study revealed that in general both the Greek and Armenian learners' attitudes towards English and its role in the world today and their motivation to learn it are quite positive, but at the same time it becomes apparent that the socio-educational context informs the formation of the learners' attitudes and motivation as the main predictors of success in foreign language attainment. Even though the number of the participants does not allow generalizable conclusions, it seems that in our study, given the different socio-educational, socio-economic and even geo-political factors, the Armenian and Greek learners have developed distinct attitudinal and motivational profiles. What can be deduced from this study is that language attitudes and motivation are context-specific; therefore, in every educational context detailed research on learners' attitudes and motivation to learn a foreign language and English in particular should be conducted and language teaching pedagogy, language teaching policies and teaching materials should be appropriated to the needs of the learners within the concrete educational context. With regard to the issue of EIL, the Greek sample showed a higher awareness of the EIL-related issues due to such factors as the Greek learners' socio-educational and geo-political milieu, which contribute greatly to the promotion of EIL in Greece. More cross-sectional studies like the present one should be conducted in different educational contexts in order to reveal the underlying differences in learners' attitude and motivation to learn English and to examine those crucial factors which affect learners' attitudes and motivation and give rise to those differences.

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## Notes

1. In the case of cluster sampling, the entire population is divided into groups, or clusters, and a random sample of these clusters are selected. However, all observations in the selected clusters are included in the sample.
2. Cronbach's alpha is the most commonly used method of examining reliability.
3. The Oxford QPT (UCLES 2001) is a flexible test of English language proficiency. It is quick and easy to administer and it is ideal for placement testing and examination screening. It has two versions: a computer-based and a paper and pen version. Learners of all levels and all ages can sit for this test.



4. PASW 18 (Former SPSS) (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) is a statistical package used for statistical data analysis in order to draw descriptive statistics such as frequencies, charts, etc., as well as to carry out quite sophisticated inferential statistical procedures like analysis of variance, factor analysis, cluster analysis, etc.
5. The chi-square test is a popular non-parametric statistical test used for examining the association between the variables and a large value of chi-square is an indication of a great difference (Hinton et al., 2004).
6. The Mann Whitney U test is a non-parametric statistical test used to trace the difference between two groups. It is one of the most popular significance tests equivalent of the independent samples t-test. We use the Mann-Whitney U test when the assumptions of the t-test are not met (Hinton et al., 2004).
7. According to the Common European Framework of Reference for Language learning (Council of Europe, 2001), level A1 is called *Breakthrough* and is considered the lowest level of generative language use. Level A2 is called *Waystage*, entailing the knowledge of the majority of descriptors stating social functions, and finally level B1 is characterized by the ability to maintain an extended conversation. The anticipated proficiency level that the learners of the sixth grade of primary school should possess has been set to A2-level proficiency level (Basic user).

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