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Factors Influencing Teachers' Motivation of English as a Foreign Language Instructors

Cigdem Fidan*

Corresponding Author's Email: cfidan@u.rochester.edu

University of Rochester

Abstract

In education, the concern is often on students' motivation for learning. However, motivation for teaching is also critical because teachers' involvement, excitement, and motivation in the teaching process correlatively help students' learning process. Applying a mixed-method research design, this study examines teachers' motivation of English as a foreign language instructor working at public universities in the Southeast region of Turkey. An adapted Attitude of Motivation Test Battery was applied to 40 English as a foreign language instructor. Moreover, semi-structured interviews conducted with 20 participants, 5 classroom observations, and teacher diaries written by 2 participants were used to gather qualitative data. While Statistical Package of Social Sciences 15.0 was used to analyze quantitative data, content analysis was applied to analyze data gathered through semi-structured interviews, classroom observations, and teacher diaries. The results show that there are internal and external factors influencing teachers' motivation. The results also show that despite the negative influence of some external factors on teachers' motivation, instructors showed enthusiastic attitudes while teaching English. Therefore, the study suggests establishing professional standards and better physical conditions in and around the teaching contexts to increase the teachers' motivation of English as a foreign language instructor teaching at public universities.

Keywords: Teachers' motivation, teachers' enthusiasm, motivation, mixed-method research study, Attitude and Motivation Test Battery

INTRODUCTION

Research studies on teacher motivation often explore different factors influencing teachers' motivation; the impact of teachers' motivation on their teaching, and the relationship between teachers' motivation to teach and students' motivation to learn (e.g., Addison and Brundrett, 2008; Pelletier et al., 2002; Roth et al., 2007; Smithers and Robinson, 2003). However, few research studies focus on teachers' motivation of English as a foreign language (EFL) teachers (e.g., Kassabgy et al., 2001).

While teaching English, EFL teachers are often expected to positively influence learners' motivation to learn a foreign language (Dewaele et al., 2023). However, motivating students depends on how motivated the teachers are (Bernaus et al., 2009). Research studies on teacher motivation have found that teachers have intrinsic, extrinsic, and altruistic motivation ("internalized extrinsic motivation" (Muller et al., 2009, p. 579)) to teach. For example, teachers are found to be driven by intrinsic reasons to join the profession of teaching (Muller et al., 2009). Educating the next generation, sharing knowledge, and furthering knowledge are found among the altruistic reasons for teachers' motivation (Kyriacou & Coulthard, 2000). Extrinsic reasons such as the profession with the most holidays, adequate salary, job security, and affordable tuition at teaching colleges, opportunities for earning extra money, and the social

status for teachers are also found among the factors influencing teachers' motivation (Bastick, 2000).

On the other hand, teachers' burnout, personal vulnerability, lack of personal accomplishment, a feeling of discouragement and disillusionment, and occupational stress are among the factors negatively influencing teachers' motivation (Bedir & Yıldırım, 2000; Özkan, 2013). Moreover, lack of intellectual challenge, that is to teach the same subject without discovering and acquiring new knowledge, skills, and abilities, restricted autonomy such as nationwide standardized tests, national curricula, and general mistrust reflected by administration demands are also found among the factors negatively influencing teachers' motivation (Dörnyei, 2001; Dewaele et al., 2023).

Teachers' enthusiasm is defined as a prominent teacher behavior that affects students' learning (Carlisle & Phillips, 1984). Students whose teachers are enthusiastic and excited to teach are often found to be more motivated to learn (Carbonneau et al., 2008). Enthusiastic teacher attitudes are defined as wide-open eyes, frequent demonstrative questions, varied dramatic body movements, varied emotive facial expressions, selection of varied words, especially adjectives, ready animated acceptance of ideas and feelings, and exuberant overall energy (Borg & Gall, 1983). The research studies show that teachers' motivation and enthusiasm positively influence students' learning (Calkins et al., 2023). However, more research is required to explore factors influencing teachers' motivation and enthusiasm, especially in the field of EFL.

In Turkey, studies often focus on teachers' motivation at the K-12 level (Barlı et al., 2010; Büyükses, 2010; Yılmaz & Aslan, 2013). However, there is dearth of research on teachers' motivation of EFL instructors working at public universities, which is the focus of this study. Thus, the study asks these research questions:

- What are the factors influencing teachers' motivation of EFL instructors teaching at public university?
- How does teachers' motivation of EFL instructors influence their enthusiasm to teach English?

METHOD

A mixed method research design was applied in the study to identify the attitudes of EFL instructors in terms of teachers' motivation, factors affecting EFL instructors' teaching motivation, and the relationship between EFL instructors' teachers' motivation and their enthusiasm to teach. Quantitative data was gathered through an adapted Attitude Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) (Gardner, 2007). Interviews, classroom observations, and teacher diaries were used to gather qualitative data.

Research Context

Public universities in the Southeast Region of Turkey were selected as the research context. The Southeast Region of the country has a border with Syria to the south and Iraq to the southeast, which linguistically and culturally influences the region where Turkish, Arabic, and Kurdish are spoken. The Region was purposefully selected because of its cultural, demographic, geographic, and linguistic characteristics different from those of other regions in Turkey. There are nine cities in the region and each city has at least one public university where English is taught as a foreign language in their Schools of Foreign Languages (Engin & Önen, 2019).

Participants

All EFL instructors working at public universities in the region were invited to be participants in the study. The participant information sheet was sent through the websites of the

School of Foreign Languages of the public universities in the region. 40 EFL instructors were accepted to be the participants of the study. Participants are all Turkish and they all have at least one year of EFL teaching experience at the selected universities. While 12 participants are from the same city where they teach, 28 participants are from different regions of Turkey. Among 40 participants, 23 participants are female, and 17 participants are male. The age range of the participants is between 27 and 47.

Data Collection Tools

To gather quantitative data, Gardner's Attitude and Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) was adapted and applied. AMTB is made up of over 130 items, and its reliability and validity have been confirmed (Gardner, 2007). While adapting the AMTB for the study, besides the factors effective on teachers' motivation of EFL instructors, the researcher also considered cultural, economic, demographic, and geographic features of the region. The adapted form of AMTB consists of three sections with Likert-type items (Strongly Disagree=1, Slightly Disagree=2, Neutral=3, Slightly Agree=5, Strongly Agree=6). The AMTB was used to identify:

- Factors affecting motivation of EFL instructors,
- Attitudes of motivated and de-motivated EFL instructors,
- The relation between teachers' motivation of EFL instructors and their enthusiasm to teach.

To gather qualitative data, semi-structured interviews were applied to 20 participants who were randomly selected among the 40 participants. Moreover, 5 volunteer participants were observed in the classrooms while teaching English to observe the attitudes of the participants considering teachers' motivation and enthusiasm. Finally, teacher diaries written by 2 volunteer participants were analyzed.

Data Analysis

Content analysis was applied to analyze the qualitative data. The quantitative data were analyzed through Statistical Package of Social Sciences 15.0 (SPSS), which is a computer application used in social sciences for statistical analysis of data to create tables and graphs. To ensure the reliability of the adapted questionnaire, a pilot study was applied with randomly selected 8 participants. 28 items were analyzed through SPSS and according to the results, unreliable items were extracted. As statistical analysis revealed, the questionnaire's Cronbach's alpha value was .776, which indicates a high level of internal consistency and reliability for the items in the questionnaire.

Gardner's Motivation Theory (GMT) is applied as a theoretical framework in the study, which is mainly based on second language learning in which motivation is considered a mixture of elements including effort, desire, and positive attitude toward language learning and teaching (Gardner, 2007).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The results reveal factors influencing teachers' motivation of EFL instructors, attitudes of motivated and de-motivated EFL instructors, and the influence of teachers' motivation on EFL instructors' enthusiasm to teach.

Findings 1: Factors Influencing Teachers' Motivation of EFL Instructors

40 participants replied to 13 items in section I of the AMTB which is to identify the factors influencing teachers' motivation of EFL instructors teaching at public universities. Table 1 illustrates the statistical analysis of the 13 items.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Items in Section I of the AMTB

Items	N	Mean	Mdn	Std. Deviation	Df	Sig.	Chi-Square	%
S1Q1	40	3,825	4	,74722	3	,000	48,200 ^a	72,5% / Slightly Agree
S1Q2	40	4,375	4	,54006	2	,000	18,950 ^b	60% / Slightly Agree
S1Q4	40	2,050	2	,98580	3	,000	18,400 ^a	80% / Slightly Disagree
S1Q6	40	3,650	4	1,05125	4	,000	24,750 ^c	82,5% / Slightly Agree
S1Q9	40	2,325	2	1,09515	4	,000	37,750 ^c	95% / Slightly Agree
S1Q10	40	2,525	2	1,33949	4	,055	9,250 ^c	95% / Slightly Agree
S1Q15	40	2,175	2	1,27877	4	,001	18,000 ^c	92,5% / Slightly Agree
S1Q16	40	4,200	4	,85335	4	,000	44,000 ^c	62,5% / Slightly Agree
S1Q18	40	4,175	4	,74722	3	,000	37,400 ^a	70% / Slightly Agree
S1Q19	40	4,225	4	,83166	3	,000	19,800 ^a	57,5% / Slightly Agree
S1Q22	40	2,975	3	1,12061	4	,004	15,500 ^c	97,5% / Slightly Agree
S1Q23	40	2,500	2	1,21950	4	,136	7,000 ^c	95% / Slightly Agree
S1Q24	40	1,625	2	,74032	2	,001	14,450 ^b	95% / Slightly Disagree
S1Q25	40	4,425	4	,54948	2	,000	17,450 ^b	50% / Slightly Agree

Internal Factors

The results show that EFL instructors' interests and desire to teach English are among the internal factors influencing their teachers' motivation. The opportunity to use language in the classroom and be able to speak in English was found to motivate EFL instructors intrinsically. Religion is also found to positively influence EFL instructors' teachers' motivation. One participant stated that "in religion, it is high virtuous to be a good teacher and teach well, that is why, I wish to teach well to my students to be a good teacher" (Interview).

On the other hand, four participants stated that they feel "some discomfort when teaching English which negatively influences their motivation to teach" (Interview). Two of these participants also stated, "a need to make physical changes in the classroom to motivate [themselves] to teach" (Interview).

External factors

Analysis of section I of AMTB shows that extrinsic factors such as teaching English to be respected positively influence teachers' motivation. In addition, salary, students' motivation and enthusiasm to learn, the English level of students, classroom materials, and support of administration are found external factors influencing teachers' motivation. Having been abroad and having received qualified undergraduate education are found external factors positively influencing teachers' motivation of EFL instructors.

On the other hand, limited social life in the cities, where EFL instructors live and teach, and receiving little or no support for professional development is stated negatively influence teachers' motivation of EFL instructors (Mdookh & Yildirim, 2023).

Findings 2: Attitudes of Motivated and De-motivated EFL Instructors

Section II of the AMTB includes seven items. The purpose of this section is to identify the attitudes of motivated and de-motivated EFL instructors.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Items in Section II of the AMTB

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Min.	Max.			
S2Q1	40	2,4500	,60481	1,00	3,00			
S2Q2	40	2,3000	,57124	1,00	3,00			
S2Q3	40	2,8000	,41039	2,00	3,00			
S2Q5	40	2,1500	,67082	1,00	3,00			
S2Q7	40	2,4500	,51042	2,00	3,00			
S2Q11	40	2,4500	,51042	2,00	3,00			
S2Q12	40	2,4000	,59824	1,00	3,00			
		S2Q1	S2Q2	S2Q3	S2Q5	S2Q7	S2Q11	S2Q12
Chi-Square		7,300 ^a	9,100 ^a	7,200 ^b	4,900 ^a	,200 ^b	,200 ^b	7,300 ^a
Df		2	2	1	2	1	1	2
Asymp. Sig.		,026	,011	,007	,086	,655	,655	,026

The participants stated that when they feel de-motivated they show different attitudes. For example, one of the participants said “When I feel not motivated to teach, I want to stay alone and get rest” (Interview). However, when demotivated to teach, participants showed enthusiastic attitudes to teach EFL, “when I am de-motivated in any case, I usually try harder to motivate myself to teach. Sometimes, it is difficult here in this city to try harder, but I am making it” (Interview). Another participant stated that “I force myself to teach and do not want to spend time in vain. If I feel my students enthusiastic to learn, I also motivate myself to teach” (Interview).

The analysis of classroom observations also shows that motivated EFL instructors used an effective tone of voice to attract students’ attention, spoke English according to the level of their students, helped students to understand English, and often began the lesson with a joke.

Findings 3: Influence of Teachers’ Motivation of EFL Instructors on Their Enthusiasm to Teach

Section III of the AMTB includes seven items about the influence of teachers’ motivation of EFL instructors on their enthusiasm to teach. Table 3. illustrates related items and their descriptive statistics.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of Items in section III of the AMTB

	E1Q1	E1Q2	E1Q4	E1Q5	E1Q6	E1Q7	E1Q8
Mean	2,30	2,05	2,15	2,20	2,15	2,15	2,15
Median	2,00	2,00	2,00	2,00	2,00	2,00	2,00
Std. Deviation	,47016	,22361	,36635	,41039	,48936	,48936	,36635
Range	1,00	1,00	1,00	1,00	2,00	2,00	1,00
Minimum	2,00	2,00	2,00	2,00	1,00	1,00	2,00
Maximum	3,00	3,00	3,00	3,00	3,00	3,00	3,00
	E1Q1	E1Q2	E1Q4	E1Q5	E1Q6	E1Q7	E1Q8
Chi-Square	3,200 ^a	16,200 ^a	9,800 ^a	7,200 ^a	16,300 ^b	16,300 ^b	9,800 ^a
Df	1	1	1	1	2	2	1
Asymp. Sig.	,074	,000	,002	,007	,000	,000	,002

Most participants emphasized “a strong relationship between teachers’ motivation and teachers’ enthusiasm” (Interview). One of the participants stated that “When I am motivated, I

am too enthusiastic to do activities in the classroom. I want to use more visual and audible recourses. That is, I become more active and relatively more creative while teaching” (Interview).

The study found that in addition to internal factors influencing teachers’ motivation of EFL instructors, external factors such as students, classroom materials, and institutional support also influence teachers’ motivation and enthusiasm to teach EFL (Mdookh & Yildirim, 2023). The study also found that there is an inverse correlation between teachers’ motivation and enthusiasm. That is, despite feeling demotivated, some EFL instructors showed enthusiastic attitudes while teaching English on which internal factors of teachers’ motivation can be effective.

Discussion

Based on the study results, factors influencing teachers’ motivation of EFL instructors are categorized as internal and external (Bastick, 2000; Kyriacou & Coulthard, 2000; Muller et al., 2009). Internal factors were found as interest in foreign language learning and teaching, altruistic reasons to teach EFL to new generations, and religious belief. On the other hand, external factors were found as salary, social life, support of the institution, the level of the students, and classroom materials.

Both internal and external factors were found positively influence teachers’ motivation of EFL instructors (Biricik, 2010). For example, teaching English for practical purposes (e.g. to get a good job), classroom materials that enable EFL instructors to integrate digital resources, and support of the institution in providing better teaching environments were found positively influence teachers’ motivation of EFL instructors (Biricik, 2010). Moreover, students’ motivation to learn, the English level of the students, classroom size, accessing external resources, and investing in professional development with the support of the institution were found as external factors positively influencing teachers’ motivation of EFL instructors (Dörnyei, 2001; Mdookh & Yildirim, 2023). On the other hand, the study found that having little or no control over the curriculum and course books negatively influences EFL instructors’ teachers’ motivation.

The study found that there is a direct and positive correlation between teachers’ motivation and enthusiasm (Calkins et al., 2023). In the classroom, participants who showed motivated attitudes also showed enthusiastic attitudes to teach. For example, while teaching English, enthusiastic EFL instructors used dancing, wide-open eyes, and uplifting and varied voices. Similarly, they used emotive facial expressions and varied words which are important in communication. Enthusiastic attitudes of EFL instructors indicate that EFL instructors are interested and motivated to teach English in the classroom where enthusiastic attitudes of teachers are crucial to encourage students who especially feel anxious about language learning.

All in all, the study found that the participants were motivated to teach English and showed motivated and enthusiastic attitudes in the classroom. For example, participants were well-prepared for the lesson and used extra classroom materials to engage students in the lesson. The study also found motivated EFL instructors’ attitudes as enthusiastic in teaching EFL; using English in the classroom as much as possible; giving importance to professional development; confidently speaking English outside of the classroom and encouraging students to use English in and out of the classrooms. Studies on teachers’ motivation reveal a positive correlation between teachers’ motivation and their engagement, commitment, and persistence in teaching and teaching enthusiasm (Calkins et al., 2023; Watt & Richardson, 2008). This study also shows a positive relationship between teachers’ motivation of EFL instructors and their enthusiasm in teaching English.

CONCLUSION

This study is based on the idea that motivating teachers to teach can also motivate learners to learn (Atkinson, 2000; Dewaele et al., 2023). Thus, the study focuses on teachers' motivation of EFL instructors who teach at public universities, which is often a neglected area when teachers' motivation is considered as the research focus is often on K-12 teachers' motivation. The study found a positive correlation between teachers' motivation and their enthusiasm to teach. Moreover, the study found that external factors positively influence teachers' motivation for which higher education institutions and reformers should work collaboratively to set professional standards to motivate EFL instructors teaching at public universities.

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