

CATEGORIZING GOALS IN L2 LEARNING AND METHODOLOGICAL IMPLICATIONS: A CASE STUDY

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Abstract. This research represents an investigation of the goals in L2 learning and attempts to link empirical findings to English language programme planning and pedagogy.

Following a critical analysis and evaluation of the most representative research on the topic to date, the results obtained from the empirical analysis carried out with 352 users of English as L2 are explained and discussed in light of the Spanish context.

Goals in L2 learning are classified into four different profiles: two traditional ones which account for the “integrative” and “instrumental” reasons, and two new ones, labelled as “discoverer” and “practically minded,” which turned out to be the most representative and illustrative profiles defining the context studied.

The results allow us (i) to question the traditional strict instrumental-integrative dichotomy, (ii) to get a closer and more detailed view of our students’ goals, needs and interests, and (iii) to propose some implications for the language classroom.

Key words. *Language learning, instrumental/integrative orientation, Spanish context*

1. Introduction

It is widely accepted and supported by research during the last decades that whereas acquisition of a first language (L1) is natural and takes place to fulfil the basic human necessity of communication, learning a second language (L2)¹ is an arduous task which requires a lot of effort, especially in the formal classroom situation.

Although aptitude for Second Language Acquisition (SLA)² has been traditionally highlighted as one of the most crucial factors to predict success in L2, affective variables, such as attitude, orientation, anxiety, and motivation have proved to be as relevant (Gardner, 1985; Lasagabaster, 2003) or even more so (cf. Sasaki, 1993).³

Research on SLA, then, considers motivation as a key role in L2 learning and summarises its position by claiming that the stronger the motivation, the better the results.

¹ Originally, the term “second” language refers to a language other than the first/mother tongue which is acquired or learnt in a country where the L2 is widely used, i.e. it mostly takes place in natural contexts (for example, English in Canada or German among Spanish immigrants in Germany), and the term “foreign” refers to that language other than the first which is acquired and learnt in an artificial context, i.e. the language to be learnt is not the language of the society and is primarily learnt in the classroom. Nevertheless, it has not been proved that learners in these two situations learn in a different way (Cook, 1991), and the term “second language” (L2) is much more widely used as a neutral way to describe both (Ellis, 1994). This term will be the one used throughout the article; however, both “second” and “foreign” will appear inside inverted commas when the original meaning needs to be highlighted.

² Krashen and Terrell (1983) make a distinction between the terms “acquisition” and “learning” in order to differentiate between the natural, effortless and unconscious process of “acquiring” or picking up a language, and the artificial, arduous and conscious process required to “learn” it or to study it. Second language users “learn” and “acquire” an L2 in a very complex way, so it is not possible to say which elements are learnt or acquired. Thus, I will follow Ellis idea to use them interchangeably and place them inside inverted commas as if used in their distinctive senses (Ellis, 1994).

³ In this study, Sasaki found that cognitive factors explain 42% of the variance, whereas the rest is explained by affective factors, especially those related to motivation.

Harmer (1988:3) defines motivation as “soame kind of internal drive that encourages somebody to pursue a course of action,” and Dulay, Burt and Krashen (1982) define motivation to learn a language as “the incentive, the need, or the desire to achieve proficiency that the learner feels to learn the second language” (p. 47).

Research on motivation is dominated by the work of Gardner and Lambert, who have constructed the “Attitude Motivation Index” (AMI) to measure motivation. Gardner and Lambert make a distinction between ‘orientation’ and ‘motivational intensity,’ two terms which correspond to the reasons why a second language is learnt and the effort and persistence in the learning process respectively.⁴ Motivation is defined as “a combination of effort plus desire to achieve the goal of learning the language” (Gardner, 1985:10).

Motivation in SLA, defined as “an inherently complex enterprise” (Dörnyei, 2003:2), has different theoretical approaches (see Clément and Gardner, 2001; Dörnyei, 2001a, 2001b, 2003, MacIntyre, 2002 for a review). However, it is Gardner and Lambert’s distinction between ‘integrative’ and ‘instrumental’ orientation which has been widely accepted and studied and the approach we will use for this work.

Integrative Orientation is defined as “those classes of reasons that suggest that the individual is learning a second language in order to learn about, interact with, or become closer to the second language community” (Gardner, 1985: 54). L2 users⁵ with this type of orientation are people who show not only a positive emotional and interpersonal predisposition towards the target group, the target culture and the target way of life, but also a desire to interact, become familiar with or even become a member of this new community, in Lambert’s words, “a sincere and personal interest in the people and culture represented by the other language group” (Lambert 1974: 98). Thus, Dörnyei emphasises that integrative orientation implies a “sort of a psychological and emotional identification” (Dörnyei 2003: 5).

This type of orientation is in contrast with the practical goal implied in the instrumental orientation. Those instrumentally orientated have are reward oriented (material, cultural and/or personal) with a more specific and useful goal in mind, such as learning an L2 to enter university, to get a job, to get a promotion, to read any text written in the foreign language, to travel, to attain higher social status, etc.

2. Integrative orientation in detail

Based on the idea that identification and positive attitudes towards parents are crucial for first language acquisition (Mowrer, 1950), Gardner and Lambert (1972) suggest that integrative orientation is the key for success in SLA (cf. "Sociolinguistic Model," Gardner, 1985, 2002):

The words, sounds, grammatical principles and the like that the language teacher tries to present are more than aspects of some linguistic code; they are integral parts of another culture. As a result, students’ attitudes toward the specific language group are bound to influence how successful they will be in incorporating aspects of that language (Gardner, 1985: 6). Gardner and Lambert have hypothesised that students integratively oriented will show better competence in the L2 than those instrumentally oriented, as “striving for a comfortable place in two cultures seems to be the best motivational basis for becoming bilingual” (Gardner and Lambert, 1972:130).⁶

⁴ Research to date shows that ‘motivational intensity’ is the most influential factor of the two in predicting success in SLA (cf. Gómez, 2000, 2001, 2005; Fuertes and Gómez, 2004, 2005).

⁵ Here, the term ‘user’ is used as a neutral term to define both those who ‘use’ and ‘acquire’ an L2 in a natural context and those who ‘use,’ ‘acquire’ and/or ‘learn’ an L2 in formal contexts.

⁶ This hypothesis was supported by the research they did at that time, with only one exception, the study done in Philippines, where instrumental orientation correlated positively with competence in the L2 (cf. Gardner and Lambert, 1972).

The supremacy of integrative orientation has been proved in empirical research done by authors such as Arratibel (1999), Arratibel et al. (1998, 2001),⁷ Clément et al. (1978), Crookes and Schmidt (1991), Desrochers and Gardner (1981), Gardner et al. (1985, 1997), Gardner and Lysynchuk (1990), Gardner and MacIntyre, (1993), Gardner and Smythe (1981), Giles and Burne (1982), Glikzman et al. (1982), Ramage (1990), Schumann (1978, 1986), Strong (1984), Taylor et al (1977), Tremblay et al. (1995). Most of these researchers agree with the idea that integrative motivation is more effective in the long term and it also seems to be the best way to acquire a good knowledge of different registers and native-like pronunciation.

Nevertheless, despite the overwhelming amount of research supporting the supremacy of integrative orientation, there is also research which supports the opposite, i.e. the negative influence of integrative orientation on the level of proficiency in the L2 (cf. Chihara and Oller, 1978; Lukmani, 1972; Oller, Hudson and Liu, 1977). The most representative and also most extreme case can be seen in the sociolinguistic study carried out by Oller, Baca and Vigil (1977) in which they analyse the attitudes a group of Mexican immigrant women in southern California have towards the target culture and how this affects their acquisition of English as an L2. Results show that those with positive attitudes towards American people did not attain as high a level of proficiency in the L2 as those who valued them negatively. This phenomenon is explained by a desire some L2 users have to manipulate native L2 speakers, as a way of controlling and triumphing over a community they despise, a phenomenon which was named ‘Machiavellian Motivation’ (cf. Oller and Perkins, 1978).

However representative the amount of research supporting the integrative orientation supremacy can be, we have to consider the situation where it takes place, as the situation in Canada, the Basque Country or any other place where this research took place is quite different from the one we find in our everyday classes where English is learnt as a “foreign” language: whereas in the first group contact with the L2 and L2 culture is inevitable, the second group has very limited or no contact at all with a language which is learnt in an artificial context. Thus, we are facing very different circumstances and also a very different nature, as we will analyse in the following section.

3. Instrumental orientation in detail

Although smaller in number, some research studies support the supremacy of instrumental over integrative orientation: Burstal et al. (1974), Dörnyei (1990), Fuertes and Gómez (2004, 2005), Gómez (2000, 2001, 2005), Gómez and Lasagabaster (2008), Kachru (1986), Lasagabaster (2003), Lukmany (1972), Pierson and Fu (1982).⁸

Dörnyei, one of the greatest supporters of instrumental orientation, maintains that the supremacy of this type of orientation is based on the nature of L2 learners in the formal context of foreign language learning. He suggests that motivation to learn or acquire a language must be different for those who acquire a “second” language than for those who acquire and learn a “foreign” language, due to the different approaches which take place in

⁷ These two references correspond to studies done in the Basque Country, one of the four bilingual contexts in Spain. Arratibel supports that integrative orientation is the best way to promote the use of Euskara and also helps students to better “acquire” and “learn” the language.

⁸ When comparing the amount of research devoted to support the integrative orientation, we should consider the reasons Dörnyei gives for this supremacy, claiming that it is no accident that L2 motivation research was initiated in Canada, due to its unique situation of the coexistence of the world’s most vital languages, and above all, the great support given by the Canadian government that sponsored and promoted research in this area (cf. Dörnyei, 2003).

the two situations. Whereas the acquisition of a “second” language takes place in a natural context where L2 users have the privilege of direct access to L2 language and culture, acquisition and learning of a “foreign” language takes place in an artificial context where contact with L2 language and culture is very limited or non-existent. Based on this idea, Dörnyei supports that instrumental reasons play a more important role in foreign language students’ motivation, as they are more real to them, are closer to them and their situation, and therefore they are more meaningful for them (cf. Dörnyei, 1990).⁹

Several studies have been carried out with university students in which orientations have been measured (cf. Gómez, 2000, 2001, 2005; Fuertes and Gómez, 2004 y 2005; Lasagabaster, 2003; Gómez and Lasagabaster, 2008, Gómez et al, in press, 2010, 2009, Sánchez et al, in press) and all of them show not only the students’ preference for instrumental goals, but also the positive influence this type of orientation has on motivational intensity, i.e. on the level of effort, work and dedication to language learning. Thus, the instrumental group used to attend classes regularly, do their homework and read more than the integrative group (cf. Fuertes and Gómez, 2004:201).

Nevertheless, and despite the fact that this type of orientation seems to fit best with our learning context, it also has its drawbacks, being the short effect the most relevant one. Gardner and MacIntyre (1991) maintain that, although instrumental orientation can lead to success, once the prize or incentive is lost, their motivation is also lost and their learning process is hindered, whereas those integratively orientated will keep their interest longer. Instrumental orientation, therefore, seems “insufficient to account for the persistence needed in the laborious and time-consuming task of developing real competence in a new language” (Gardner and Lambert, 1972: 12).

This situation is very well illustrated by Lasagabaster in The Basque Country. He maintains that the stimulus required to learn Euskara as an L2 can be lost once the instrumental goals are achieved; he explains how people who have studied Euskara in order to work for the government (where competence in both Spanish and Euskara is required), stop using this L2, use it very rarely or even refuse to use it once they have achieved their goal (cf. Lasagabaster 2003: 89).

4. Integrative-instrumental dichotomy called into question

The categorization of the two types of orientation has become a linguistic rule (Green, 1999); however, some researchers disagree with this dichotomy, which they consider very restrictive and offer new perspectives which complement the integrative-instrumental in a very positive way (cf. Au 1988 and Gardner 1985 for a review of these works).

On the one hand, classifying types of orientations strictly and clearly is a difficult task, so definitions can vary and do not correspond exactly to one or the other type. Travelling abroad could be considered, therefore, an integrative reason (to encounter a different culture), but also an instrumental one (to be promoted, to expand a market into a foreign country, etc) (cf. Lasagabaster, 2003).

On the other hand, these two types of orientations are not opposed nor are they alternative choices, but they can be present in the same person, i.e. they can be combined (cf. Brown, 2000; Burstall, 1975; Green, 1993; Lasagabaster, 2003; Muchnick and Wolfe, 1982; Porter-Ladousse, 1981). A person can then be both integratively and instrumentally orientated: being interested in learning Euskara to take part in cultural activities and also being aware of the

⁹ Although he strongly supports instrumental orientation, he also agrees with the fact that integrative orientation can be useful for advanced levels.

positive consequences this can have in their social life, job, etc. (cf. Lasagabaster, 2003: 88-89).

The third argument against this “black or white” issue is the nature of the orientation itself. Dörnyei tries to explain the controversies and inconsistencies found in the research done to date, since it has rejected the dynamic character and temporal variation of motivation. He points out that orientation goes through different stages and is developed together with the students’ experience, knowledge of the world and maturity. Due to these ongoing changes of motivation over time, there is a need to adopt a “process-oriented approach that can account for the “ups and downs” of motivation, that is, the ongoing changes of motivation over time” (Dörnyei, 2003:18).

And last, but not least, Crookes and Schmidt (1991) suggest that there should be a wider range of orientations to account for different groups, situations and contexts in L2 learning. Arratibel supports this idea with her research with adult students of Euskara. She found up to five different types of orientations¹⁰ and makes a very important contribution by revealing that types of orientations vary according to the group studied and that special groups can also have their own special type of orientations (Arratibel, 1999; Arratibel et al. 1998, 2001).

5. Methodology

The data used for this study belongs to a wider empirical research carried out at the University of Valladolid (central Spain) during the academic year 2002-2003 (cf. Gómez, 2005). The survey involved 352 students, 86.5% of which were not studying English at that time (group –Eng) and 13.35% of which were undertaking a course on Business English (group +Eng),¹¹ a statistical representative sample of the 2128 first, second and third year undergraduate students enrolled in the School of Business during that academic year.

The respondents, most of them female students in their early twenties, answered an anonymous and voluntary questionnaire, previously piloted in a sub-sample of 52, and results were tabulated and measured with the SPSS program.

The data collection instrument was made of originally designed questions, the majority of which were closed and measured with a 5 point Likert scale. Eighty-eight variables were measured in order to collect information about internal and external factors affecting SLA, such as the students’ attitudes towards second language and culture, the sociolinguistic context surrounding them, opinions about the teaching of English in Spain, type and amount of work done to learn the language, and competence in the L2.

One of the most interesting results obtained from this research study corresponds to the section where goals for language learning were analysed. In order to collect information about the reasons for studying English as an L2, eleven statements were designed (vars. 59-69) which originally accounted for the two traditional types of orientations (instrumental and integrative) (see tables 1 and 2), and were measured with a Likert scale.

¹⁰ The students of her sample showed the following types of orientations: 1) instrumental, 2) integrative 3) mixed 4) personal benefit 5) transmission. These are the varieties which define the sample studied and show the sociolinguistic reality of the Basque Country (cf. Arratibel et al. 1998: 158).

¹¹ Business English I and Business English II are two optional modules which are taught year round in the School of Business.

6. Results

Results obtained have helped us to complement previous research studies and to illustrate the situation of the Spanish university context.

On the one hand, if we analyse the results according to the traditional two groups, we observe that there is a clear supremacy of instrumental over integrative orientation. As can be seen in table 1 below, both groups (+/-Eng) show a strong tendency towards instrumental orientation as values reach and surpass the average in 75% of the cases, even in the -Eng group. Moreover, when evaluating the variable which could be considered as the most instrumental – *for my professional future* (var. 60)-, results obtained are almost perfect, with values of up to 4.48-4.45 (mean), 5-5 (average) 5-5 (mode) (group +Eng and -Eng respectively).¹² These results help us to support previous research studies which defend instrumental reasons as being more meaningful for L2 learners and closer to them in the formal learning context (Gómez, 2000, 2001, 2007; Fuertes and Gómez, 2004, 2005; Gómez and Lasagabaster, 2008).

INSTRUMENTAL variables		Mean values		
Nº	VARIABLE :	+ENG	-ENG	+/- ENG
59	I study/would study English to... <i>get credits for my university degree</i>	3.62	2.89	2.99
60	<i>my professional future</i>	4.55	4.48	4.49
61	<i>understand the Internet, magazines/ any text written in English</i>	3.96	3.67	3.71
62	<i>travel abroad</i>	4.17	4.11	4.12
63	<i>understand the lyrics</i>	3.15	2.9	2.93
64	<i>watch films in English</i>	3.34	2.63	2.73
MEAN		3.80	3.45	3.50

Table 1: Instrumental Orientation: Mean values

¹² For a more detailed analysis of these results, see Gómez (2005: 574-662)

INTEGRATIVE variables		Mean values		
Nº	VARIABLE :	+ENG	-ENG	+/- ENG
65	I study/would study English to... <i>live in an English speaking country for some time</i>	3.64	3.37	3.4
66	<i>live in a foreign country for some time</i>	3.45	3.27	3.29
67	<i>better understand English speaking countries traditions and styles of life</i>	2.89	2.79	2.81
68	<i>take part in activities which are typical of English speaking countries</i>	2.72	2.5	2.53
69	<i>integrate & take part in the English culture</i>	2.4	2.07	2.11
MEAN		3.02	2.80	2.88

Table 2: Integrative Orientation: Mean values

We must not forget that, although the 11 variables have been originally designed according to the traditional dichotomy, classification between integrative and instrumental cannot be done strictly and clearly, so there are some variables, such as *travel abroad* (var. 62) which could also fit within the integrative group (cf. Lasagabaster, 2003).

The use of a 5 point Likert agreement scale was very appropriate as students did not have to decide among the two types of orientation, but had to value each variable independently, so that type of orientations would not be mutually exclusive. The results obtained shed light on very interesting and illustrative results which will be analysed in detail below.

First, we observe how variables significantly correlate with those of the same type; the integrative variable *Living in an English speaking country for some time* (var. 65) shows very significant correlation values ($r=0.86$, $r=0.53$, $r = 0.6$, $r=0.5$) with integrative variables 66, 67, 68 and 69 respectively. However, the results obtained support the idea that these two types of orientations are not exclusive but rather complement each other and can be present in the same person, as illustrated in the high correlation coefficient obtained between two orientations which were traditionally kept separate. Thus, the clearly instrumental variable for *my professional future* (var. 60) correlates with what could be considered as an integrative one, *Living in a foreign country for some time*, with a very significant value $r=0.52$.

As this is not a longitudinal study, we do not have data to support the dynamic nature of motivation, something which has been planned for future research (cf. Gómez et al. in press, 2010, 2009, and Sánchez et al, in press); however, and this is the most illustrative part of the study, we wanted to go further into a deeper analysis of types of orientations, so we carried out a Multifactorial analysis of variance with the 11 variables. Results obtained gave us more detailed information about our students' goals for learning English which are worth commenting on.

From a statistically point of view, results obtained in the KMO and Bartlett's Test show on the one hand that the model is statistically significant as a whole (Sig=.000),¹³ secondly that the percentage explained of each variable in the proposed model is very high - over 0.50 in every variable- (see table 3), and thirdly, we obtain four different profiles which

¹³ Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (= .798). Bartlett's Test of Sphericity: Approx. Chi-Square (1658.366), df (=66), Sig (=0.000).

let us account for 68.7% of the variance, i.e. the model proposed shows a quite accurate profile of our students' goals for second language learning.

N°	VARIABLE	Extraction
59	get credits for my university degree	.813
60	my professional future	.549
61	understand the Internet, magazines/ any text written in English	.660
62	travel abroad	.541
63	understand the lyrics	.652
64	watch films in English	.528
65	living in an English speaking country for some time	.876
66	living in a foreign country for some time	.876
67	better understand English speaking countries traditions and styles of life	.700
68	taking part in activities which are typical of English speaking countries	.786
69	integrate & take part in the English culture	.753

Table 3: Communalities (Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis)

COMPONENT	INITIAL VALUES		
	Total	% of Variance	% Cumulative
1	4.377	36.476	36.476
2	1.728	14.399	50.875
3	1.117	9.305	60.180
4	1.023	8.522	68.702
5	.805	6.708	75.410
6	.677	5.643	81.053
7	.521	4.345	89.927
8	.482	4.018	93.945
9	.371	3.091	97.036
10	.244	2.037	99.073
11	.111	.927	100.000

Table 4. Factorial analysis of Orientation +/-Eng. Total variance explained (Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis)

These results support the idea stated in section 4 of this article that the conventional classification into instrumental and integrative turns out to be very poor and restrictive if we want to account for a full description of particular students within particular contexts. In table 5 below the four profiles obtained which define our students' orientation types can be observed.

N°	VARIABLES	COMPONENTS			
		■ 1	□ 2	○ 3	● 4
59	<i>Get credits for my university degree</i>	.035	-.077	.030	.897
60	<i>my professional future</i>	-.071	.356	.334	.553
61	<i>understand the Internet, magazines/ any text written in English</i>	-.083	.073	.804	.019
62	<i>travel abroad</i>	.047	.458	.574	.008
63	<i>understand the lyrics</i>	.255	.007	.751	.151
64	<i>watch films in original version</i>	.355	.080	.619	.113
65	<i>live in an English speaking country for some time</i>	.328	.873	.070	.043
66	<i>Live in a foreign country for some time</i>	.279	.889	.077	.044
67	<i>better understand English speaking countries traditions and styles of life</i>	.740	.287	.161	-.210
68	<i>take part in activities which are typical of English speaking countries</i>	.830	.296	.086	.042
69	<i>integrate & take part in the English culture</i>	.853	.095	.074	.106

Table 5. Multifactorial Analysis of Orientation +/-Eng (Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization)

These four profiles can be better understood if we think of a continuum which goes from the classical pure integrative orientation -profile 1- to the pure instrumental one -profile 4- (see figure 1 below). Both profiles 2 and 3 correspond to the new contributions which help us to better define and explain the goals of the students sampled.

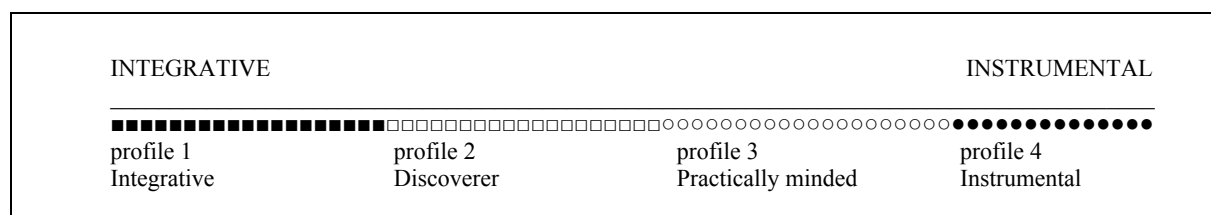


Figure 1: Orientation continuum

Profile 2 corresponds to those students who are integratively influenced, showing interest in knowing and learning about the target culture and people, may be interested in living or working abroad, but without pretending to become a member of the target group, i.e. keeping their identification with their own L1 language and culture. This second type, which we have called “discoverer” differs from the pure integrative one and could be analysed in light of Dulay, Burt and Krashen’s distinction between the “social group identification motive” and the “integrative motive”:

Learners with an integrative motive for learning a new language would wish to participate in the social or cultural life or the target language speakers while retaining their identification with their own native language group. Learners who have a social group identification motive would want social and cultural participation, but they would also want to become members of the group that speaks the new language or language variety. (Dulay et al, 1982: 50, 51)

On the other hand, profile 3 provides us with very interesting data which is worth analysing in detail. First, variables corresponding to this profile (vars. 61 to 64) not only receive some of the highest average values, but also Standard Deviation figures are the lowest and the most significant of the four groups.¹⁴ Thus, this profile which we have called “practically minded,” for the clear practical goals involved in these variables, is the one which seems to best represent the Spanish university students’ needs, both those who are still studying the language at the university (group +Eng) and those who have dropped it (group –Eng).

Figure 2 below shows how profiles 2 and 3 account for our students goals much better than the traditional dichotomy represented in profiles 1 and 4 (with the exception of instrumental variable *for my professional future* (var. 60) which also reaches very high levels).¹⁵

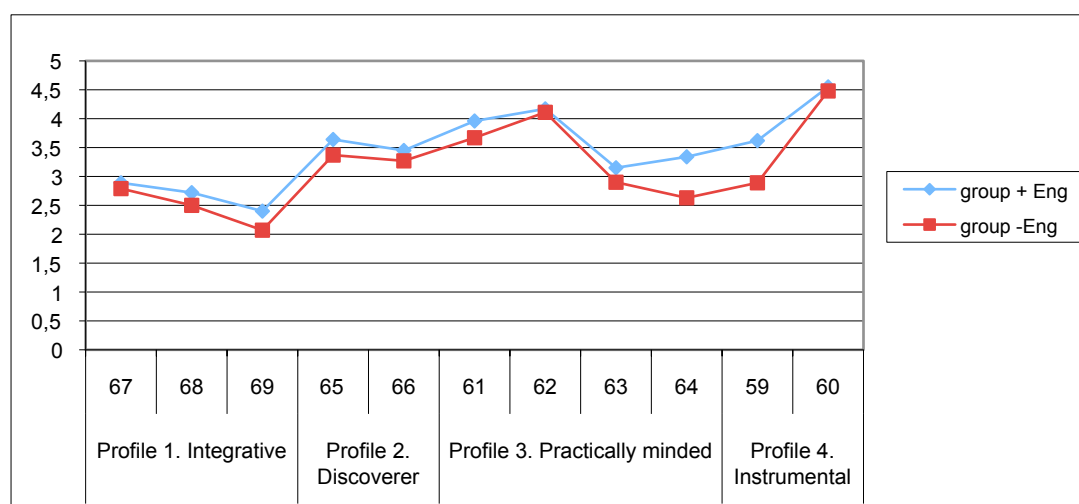


Figure 2. Average values of the four profiles studied (group +/Eng)

These results not only question the restrictive instrumental-integrative dichotomy, but also support a profile we see in our everyday life: a student who is not integratively orientated, since he or she can not really understand the idea of integration by means of becoming part of the new group due to very limited or no experience of living in a foreign country, very limited contact with the L2 and the historical language isolation that has taken place in Spain,¹⁶ but a student who is looking for more realistic, practical and effective goals, which is closer to his or her current circumstances and needs.

Profiles 2 and 3 not only are the favourite drives of the students sampled, but results also show that students belonging to any of these two groups seem to be potential good students, as their level of confidence in using the language strongly correlates with these two profiles (0.57 and 0.63 in profile 2 and 3 respectively).

¹⁴ Standard Deviation values obtained were quite below 0.5, which means that there is little or no diffusion among the answers, i.e. most students strongly agreed in their answers.

¹⁵ If we consider the low levels of vocation as a general trend among Spanish university students and the over excessive interest in passing an exam rather than learning and acquiring knowledge (cf. Marbán, 2007), it was quite unexpected to find that some variables from profiles 2 and 3 outperformed var. 59 *to get credits for my university degree*.

¹⁶ Lasagabaster (2004:79) points out the isolation Spain went through during the Dictatorship period when “second “ languages in Spain, such as Euskara, Catalan and Gaelic, were forbidden and “foreign” languages were not promoted or facilitated. Despite the fact that we as European citizens are becoming aware of the importance of knowing and using at least one language other than our L1, we still have a long way to go if we want to reach the level of some of our European counterparts.

7. Methodological implications

The present study and the results obtained give us a closer and more detailed view of our students' needs and interests, very useful information which can be directly applied in order to improve our everyday teaching.

According to Noels et al. (2003), if we as teachers want to foster sustained learning, it may not be sufficient to convince students that language learning is interesting and enjoyable, but they may also need to be persuaded that it is also personally important for them. Thus, those students who see the activities as closer to their interests and needs tend to be what Faerch and Kasper (1983) call "high input generators," i.e. students who participate more, longer and more actively. Therefore, one of the main objectives in the language classroom should be aimed at meeting the students' most immediate and future needs in order to respond to the students' different types of orientation.

In light of the results obtained in the present study, implications for the language classroom will be as follows. First, if we as teachers want to fulfil the goals of the students sampled, we need a communicative methodology and, especially the use of authentic material in the class, such as real texts from the Internet, newspapers or magazines, real listening in the form of real interaction among speakers of English (native and non-native), songs, films and programs broadcasted in English, and above all, provide them with as many opportunities to use the language as possible in the classroom and outside it.

Oral skills should be emphasized and promoted as much as possible, first, because it has been proved to be crucial for the students' needs according to the results obtained, and second and most important because Spanish students level of proficiency in oral skills and confidence when speaking English is very low.¹⁷

On the other hand, we must not forget the intercultural approach defended by The Common European Framework, and we must promote a multilingual society as a response to the European linguistic and cultural diversity, thus learning a language as an "enriching experience of otherness in language and culture" (Council of Europe 2006:1), i.e. the student should be faced with the task of not simply learning new information about the L2, but also of acquiring symbolic elements of a different ethnolinguistic community, which is especially relevant if goals for both profiles 1 and 2 of the present are to be fulfilled.

And last, but not least, whatever the reasons for studying, an L2 should be in line with the European Space of Higher Education (ESHE). We should foster autonomous learning in SLA to accomplish for two key issues: both the students' future needs and continuity in learning. The self-directed learning not only promotes personal growth, responsibility, creativity and favours self-awareness in the learning process, but also fosters students motivation and potential success (Brookes and Grundy, 1988; Dickinson 1995; Dickinson and Wenden 1995; Littlewood, 1996, 1999), and, in addition, it is the way to help our students to attain their future goals when the teacher is not there and want to keep learning English by themselves. Thus, the teacher's role should also be to teach students how to learn, to teach them learning strategies and be a promoter of autonomous learning, rather than the task master who through much repetition strengthens new language habits.

¹⁷ When the students' perceived level in English skills were measured, the variable for speaking (var. 21) stood at the lowest level of the four with 2.7 and 2.24 as median values for the +Eng and -Ing group. When students were asked whether they used to feel shy when speaking in English (var. 22), values obtained went from 3.17 to 3.38 from group +Eng and -Eng respectively

The best European language learners cite perseverance as the key for language learning success (Gil and Alabau, 1998), a perseverance our students do not seem to have, due to the incredibly low levels of personal work done (cf. Gómez, 2005), and which has been proved to play a crucial role if we want to be competent language users (Fuertes and Gómez, 2005). Teachers should encourage students to work and to use the language as much as possible by suggesting practical and entertaining ways of using the L2 by themselves: voluntary readings,¹⁸ language exchanges with foreign students, virtual communication on the web, and especially travelling abroad and taking advantage of the Socrates-Erasmus exchange programs or any programme of this type.¹⁹ Listening to songs and watching television and films in the target language are very motivating, attractive and effective resources in L2 learning which should be promoted among the Spanish university students who, according to the low median values obtained in these variables (see table 1 and figure 1) do not seem to be aware of the great potential these activities have.²⁰

The teacher's role therefore should be to reinforce students' positive attitudes and motivation towards the learning process and to encourage them to work, practice and use the language as much as possible, which will in turn influence the competence in the L2.

8. Conclusions

The results obtained in this research study encourage us to first question once more the traditional strict instrumental-integrative dichotomy, second to get a closer and more detailed view of our students' goals, needs and interests, which help us to improve and supplement previous surveys carried out under the same circumstances, and, third, to suggest some practical implications in the teaching and learning of English in the Spanish context.

Although this survey corresponds to one particular Spanish University –the University of Valladolid-, the data obtained could help us to understand the situation of Spanish university students in general: first, because of the similar context, circumstances and policies of “foreign” language learning and teaching in Spain and, second, due to the similar results found in a research study where two groups of different universities from different sociolinguistic contexts (monolingual University of Valladolid vs. multilingual University of the Basque Country)²¹ were analysed (cf. Gómez and Lasagabaster, 2008).

Castro (1992) and Lasagabaster (2004) account for a general dissatisfaction among Spanish students who spend many years studying English with apparently very poor results.

¹⁸ Previous studies carried out in the Spanish University background support the positive role of voluntary reading (cf. Jiménez, 1992, Fuertes and Gómez Martínez, 2, Gómez Martínez 2005, Lasagabaster, 2003, Gómez and Lasagabaster, 2008). In the present study, this is the variable which best correlates with the level in English ($r= 0.41$ in the +Eng group).

¹⁹ Previous research studies carried out in Spanish universities show that travelling abroad turns out to be an excellent way not only to improve the attitudes and competence in the language, but also to promote autonomous learning and avoid drop-outs (cf. Fuertes Olivera and Gómez Martínez, dos años, Gómez, 2005, Lasagabaster, 2003, 2004, Gómez and Lasagabaster, 2008). A research project carried out by Gómez et al. which is still in progress (cf. Gómez, in press, 2010, 2009) is aimed to support this view through a longitudinal analysis.

²⁰ Spain is one of the four countries together with Germany, France and Italy where films and series are dubbed. Research studies carried out show that, far from being a non-relevant issue, it is a crucial one which strongly influences SLA, especially in the case of English due to the high percentage of films and series broadcast in this language. Thus, Lasagabaster (2001) and Dewaele (2002) maintain that these are the reasons why Scandinavian countries have such a high level in English.

²¹ Castilian and Castilian and Basque are the official languages in Valladolid and the Basque Country respectively.

Our students tend to give poor marks to the teaching of English in Spain (var. 23), with 2.35 and 2.32 as median values for group –Eng /+ Eng respectively. Something similar happens when they are asked for their perceived level in English (vars. 18-21), results which are just average and drop to very low values, especially in listening and speaking skills (2.21/2.74 and 2.24/2.70 in both +Eng and –Eng respectively) (cf. Gómez, 2005: 532-537).

Nevertheless, these results contrast with the positive attitudes the students sampled have towards the English language, both the group that was studying it at the time of the data collection and the one that was not but had studied it before for 8.45 years.²² If values obtained clearly surpassed the media in the –Eng group, we should ask ourselves why there is only 13% of the population sampled who were studying English at that time; in other words, how can we account for 87% drop-outs? if we want to answer this question, we should ask ourselves the following questions: Are we teachers aware of the wide variety of students' goals in L2 learning?, are the language programs designed to fulfil our students' real needs?, do we tailor our material to these needs?, do we promote autonomous learning for a future self-directed learning outside the classroom?, do we foster extracurricular activities to compensate for the lack of contact with the “foreign” language?, why do other European English language users clearly surpass us?, are we really following a communicative methodology in our classes or is this just part of our hidden curriculum?, what is really the goal we are pursuing in our everyday teaching?

With this article we have tried to illustrate a particular context in L2 learning and to suggest to both teachers and learners some ideas to improve their everyday teaching and learning habits. Despite the great relevance motivational drives have been proved to have in second language learning and teaching, we must bear in mind that goals, needs, interests and positive attitudes are not enough, so action needs to be taken and both teachers and students should encourage and strive for practising and using the language as much as possible.

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²² Median value for variable nº 5 *number of years learning English*

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