



## Teaching Motivation of ELT Instructors through Goal Orientation Perspective

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### ABSTRACT

Studies researching second/foreign language (L2) motivation have mainly focused on the students' motivation to learn. They yielded interesting results which should be considered in the process of teaching. However, studies limited in number have attempted to shed light on teachers' motivation to teach which is very crucial in the process of learning. Thus, the aim of this study was to explore the goal orientations of in-service English instructors at various Turkish universities to reflect upon their motivational profiles. The data of study were derived from 61 (F=43; M=18) instructors of English who responded to the Measure of Achievement Goal Orientations which comprised items about distinct mastery, ability-approach, ability-avoidance, and work-avoidance goal orientations, and a demographic questionnaire. The findings of the study showed that Turkish in-service ELT instructors have a high degree of mastery goal orientation (M= 4.18; SD= 0.62). There was a significant negative correlation between mastery goal orientation and work-avoidance goal orientation ( $p < 0.01$ ) and there was a significant positive correlation between ability-avoidance goal orientation and work-avoidance ( $p < 0.01$ ). In addition, non-parametric analyses comparing English instructors' gender, degree, age and the university they work with instructors' goal orientations yielded only one significant difference. Mann Whitney U-test showed that English instructors who have Bachelor of Arts (BA) diploma adopt more ability-avoidance goal orientations than Master of Arts (MA) holders ( $p < 0.05$ ).

**Keywords:** Teacher motivation, achievement motivation, goal orientation, ELT instructors.

### INTRODUCTION

Many researchers in the field of educational psychology have attempted to shed light on motivation that is required by students to learn through several motivation theories such as attribution theory (Weiner, 1985), self-determination theory (Deci & Ryan, 1985), expectancy-value theory (Wigfield & Eccles, 2000), goal orientation theory (Ames, 1992; Ames & Archer, 1988; Dweck, 1986; Elliot & Church, 1997; Pintrich 2000). As there have been various theories on motivation, it is hard to provide a uniform definition of motivation which contains all the aspects of motivation. Pintrich and Schunk (2002) define the term as "the process whereby goal-directed activity is instigated and sustained" (p. 5). This definition views motivation as a process. However, majority of the studies on motivation focused on students' motivation, and a few researchers have investigated motivation to teach which is inevitable for teaching. Thus, the area of teacher motivation remains slightly touched. Researching teachers' motivation is substantial because it has influences on students and their learning. It is not only important for educational leaders but also the managers. It is crucial for the





advancement of educational reforms as well. Likewise, it is vital for teachers themselves with regard to satisfaction and fulfilment (De Jesus & Lens, 2005). According to Butler (2007), there are individual differences in teacher cognitions and behaviours related to teaching. Also, there are differences in teachers' use of instructional practises for schoolwork (Butler & Shibaz, 2008). As the teachers have influences on students and hence processes, outcomes and quality of learning (Butler & Shibaz, 2008), factors affecting teachers' behaviours one of which is motivation deserve succinct studies.

The construct of motivation is a complex one in that it is influenced by many factors one of which is achievement goals. Seeing the effects of goals on motivation, many researchers have attempted to study students' goal orientations in achievement contexts through employing quantitative measures or qualitative inquiries. These studies added much to the motivation literature. In the recent years, seeing the scarcity of studies investigating teacher motivation, some researchers have endeavoured to investigate it through the lens of goal orientation theory (e.g. Butler, 2007; Butler & Shibaz, 2008; Malmberg, 2006; 2008; Retelsdorf, Butler, Streblov & Schiefele, 2010; Watt & Richardson, 2008). This perspective is crucial because "teachers' goal orientations function as systems of meaning and action" (Butler, 2007, p. 242). According to her, teachers' goals should be examined carefully because teachers will encourage their own achievement goals in their students through their advices, decisions and instructional practises in the classroom (p. 251).

Achievement goal theory, which has proliferated in the last three decades, is an important perspective in the field of achievement motivation (Kaplan & Maehr, 2007). Fryer and Elliot (2008), defined goals as "what a person plans to do in a particular achievement situation" (p. 54). Although there are various goal orientations, two of them are typical of different goal orientation theories; one of which mastery and the other one being performance goals (Ames, 1992; Ames & Archer, 1988). However, other scholars named these goals with similar or different terms. For example; Dweck and Leggett (1988) and Elliott and Dweck (1988) defined learning and performance goals while Maehr and Midgley (1991) identified task-focused and ability-focused goals. The focus of the students who adopt mastery orientation is on mastering task, learning, and understanding. Their standards are self-improvement, progress, and deep understanding of task. As research on goals that students adopted in academic settings has proliferated and considering the controversial findings of performance or ability goal, scholars have made a distinction between approach and avoidance dimensions of performance or ability goals (e.g. Elliot, 1997; Elliot & Church, 1997; Elliot & Harackiewicz, 1996; Elliot & McGregor, 2001). The focus of the students who adopted ability-approach goal is on being superior, besting others, being the smartest, best at task in comparison with others whereas the focus of the students who adopted ability-avoidance goals is on avoiding inferiority, not looking stupid or dumb in comparison with others. The students in the former group use normative standards such as getting best or highest grades, being top or best performer in class while the students in the latter group use normative standards of not getting the worst grades, and not being the lowest performer in class (Schunk, Pintrich & Meece, 2008, p. 189). Another goal which is defined by Dowson and McInerney (2001); work-avoidance, is deliberately





avoiding engaging in academic tasks or attempting to minimize the effort required to complete academic tasks. They see it as a distinct goal (p. 36).

Most of the studies carried out through the lens of goal orientation theory have investigated students' motivation in the achievement contexts. Seeing the necessity to explore teachers' goals and their influences on the outcomes of their behaviours, cognitions and especially their teaching, several scholars adopted these goal orientations to shed light on teaching motivation. Little but invaluable studies have tried to cover the issues related to teachers' motivation by using this theory. The findings of these studies are presented below.

Butler (2007) examined goal orientations for teaching and associations with teachers' help seeking. Her self-report measure yielded four factors that reflect distinct mastery, ability-approach, ability-avoidance, and work-avoidance goals. Mastery goals reflected striving to learn and acquire professional understandings and skills; ability-approach reflected strivings to demonstrate superior teaching ability, ability-avoidance reflected strivings to avoid demonstration of inferior ability, and work-avoidance reflected strivings to get through the day with little effort (p. 248). The results of the study revealed that "mastery goals predicted positive perceptions of help seeking, preferences for receiving autonomous help, and frequency of help seeking; ability-avoidance predicted negative perceptions and help avoidance; and work-avoidance predicted expedient help seeking" (p. 241). Another study which investigated students' perceptions of instructional practises and students' help seeking and cheating (Butler & Shibaz, 2008) reported that mastery goal orientation predicted the higher levels of teacher support perceived by the students and lower levels of perceived teacher inhibition. They also concluded that ability-avoidance goals were associated with the reverse and student cheating. However, they reported that they did not find a correlation between teacher achievement goals and students' help seeking (p. 453). Nitsche, Dickhäuser, Fasching, and Dresel (2011) found out that learning goal orientation predicts self-efficacy for teaching and perceived benefits of help seeking positively. Nitsche et al. (2011) underlined that learning (mastery) goals played a crucial role in teachers' self-regulated learning and professional development (p. 576). Performance-approach goal orientation positively predicted self-efficacy for teaching while performance-avoidance goal orientation predicted self-efficacy negatively but perceived threat of help seeking positively (p. 583-4). Retelsdorf and Günther (2011) investigated teachers' goals' indirect effects on their instructional practises through their reference norms and they found out that mastery orientation was combined with more adaptive norms and instruction, while ability-approach, ability-avoidance and work-avoidance revealed less adaptive patterns. They also concluded that schools should encourage both students and teachers to adopt mastery goals (p. 1111).

Seeing the importance of teaching motivation and the scarcity of research in this area in Turkish context, we felt the necessity to investigate this construct with a lens of goal orientation theory. Hence, this study is significant because it is the first attempt to shed light on teaching motivation through the framework of goal orientation theory in Turkish context with a group of participants consisting in-service instructors who are





teaching General English courses in various Turkish state universities. With these concerns in mind, this present study tries to explore three research questions:

- 1) What are the goal orientations of Turkish in-service ELT instructors?
- 2) What are the inter-correlations among Turkish in-service ELT instructors' goal orientations?
- 3) Is there a significant difference among goal orientations and the instructors' gender, age, and degrees?

## METHOD

Data of the study were derived from 61 (F= 43; M=18) ELT practitioners teaching General English courses in 5 Turkish universities (Table 1). Participants' year of experience in their work ranged from 1 to 30 with a mean of 6.23 (SD=6.63).

*Table 1. Participants' Profiles*

	N	%
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	43	70.5
Male	18	29.5
<b>Degree</b>		
BA	43	71.1
MA	17	28.9
<b>Age</b>		
20-24	17	27.9
25-29	26	42.6
30-34	7	11.5
35 +	11	18.0
<b>University</b>		
Cumhuriyet	18	29.5
Atatürk	16	26.2
Namık Kemal	15	24.6
Hitit	7	11.5
Gaziosmanpaşa	5	8.2
<b>N</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>100</b>

It should be underlined that the gender distribution in the sample group was directly related to the general reflection of the overall population of the instructors at the universities. The universities were chosen according to their convenience to the researchers. They are located in various districts of Turkey. In Turkish higher education system university students, who are enrolled to a program in which the medium of instruction is not English and to programs that have no preparatory classes, have to take compulsory 2 or 3 hours General English courses for two semesters at least. These courses are taught by instructors of English who are at least holders of BA from English Language Teaching, English Language and Literature, American Language and





Literature, Linguistics or Translation Studies departments which give 4 years instruction.

In order to become an instructor at the universities, candidates should have a high GPA; at least 70 out of 100, more than 70 out of 100 points from ALES (the Entrance Examination for Graduate Studies; an exam measuring general verbal and mathematical skills of the undergraduates), and more than 80 out of 100 points from ÜDS (the Interuniversity Foreign Language Examination) or KPDS (the Foreign Language Examination for Civil Servants); all of which are carried out by ÖSYM (Higher Education Council Student Selection and Placement Centre). After having completed these requirements, candidates of this position have to take an examination about teaching methodology of English at the universities they apply to. Most of the candidates apply to this position because it is seen more prestigious and better paid than being a teacher of English at a state primary or high school. Therefore, it is a demanding position. In addition, it must be noted that there is no inspection mechanism in the higher education system and the courses of the instructors are not inspected and their work are not assessed in a formal way.

This measure is based on Butler (2007). It is slightly modified after getting permission to use and modify from the author. It attempts to measure four distinct goal orientations of teachers. The opening stem of the measure is “*Teachers differ in what makes them feel they had a successful day in school; when would you feel that you had a successful day?*” The participants were asked to mark the items anchored at 1= “*I do not agree at all*” and 5= “*I completely agree*”. The measure was administered to the participants on a voluntary basis in 2011-2012 academic year. A demographic questionnaire asking the participants’ gender, age, department of BA graduation, and degree they hold was attached to the measure. The original measure’s Butler (2007) Cronbach Alphas for mastery, ability-approach, and ability-avoidance are  $\alpha = .74$ ,  $\alpha = .78$ , and  $\alpha = .70$  respectively. However, the items for the work-avoidance dimension did not yielded a reliable scale. Table 2 shows the Cronbach Alphas of sub-dimensions of the modified measure.

*Table 2. Sample Items of Measure of Achievement Goal Orientations related to the Sub-dimensions and Cronbach Alphas*

Scale Dimensions	Item Numbers	Sample Item	Cronbach Alpha
Mastery Goal	1, 7, 9, 15	1) I learned something new about teaching or about myself as a teacher.	.60
Ability-Approach Goal	5, 6, 11, 12	11) My classes did better than those of other teachers on an exam.	.75
Ability-Avoidance Goal	2, 3, 8, 14	2) My class did not do worse than those of other teachers on an exam.	.69
Work-Avoidance Goal	4, 10,13,16	16) I managed to do my lesson without working hard.	.76





Data were collected during the 2010-2011 academic year by posting the questionnaires including the consent forms to a contact person for each university who were contacted in advance. After completion of the questionnaires by the instructors, they were sent back to the researchers. All the universities were state universities.

Data analyses were conducted with the statistical program SPSS version 16.0, and contain two sections. The first section is about descriptive statistics including minimum, maximum, mean and standard deviations of the scale's sub-dimensions. The second section is about inferential statistics including correlation analysis and non-parametric statistics, Mann Whitney U and Kruskal Wallis H tests.

## FINDINGS

This section of the study is organized in three sections. First part deals with the first research question and presents results of the descriptive statistics. Second part is the presentation of the results of the inferential statistics related to the second research question. Finally, the last part delineates the findings of the third research question.

**1. In order to answer the first research question “What are the goal orientations of Turkish in-service ELT instructors?”, descriptive statistics were conducted and results were presented in Table 3, as follows:**

*Table 3. Descriptive Statistics Containing Min, Max, SD related to Measure of Achievement Goal Orientations*

	N	Min.	Max.	Mean	SD.
1- Mastery	61	2.25	5.00	4.18	.62
2- Ability-Approach	61	1.00	5.00	3.09	.85
3- Ability-Avoidance	61	1.00	4.50	2.96	.83
4- Work-Avoidance	61	1.00	4.00	2.07	.75
Valid N	61				

As seen in Table 3, in-service ELT instructors in five universities in Turkey appear to have higher levels of mastery goal orientation. Its mean ( $M= 4.18$ ;  $SD= 0.62$ ) is the highest one among four goal orientations. This finding shows us that English instructors mostly do the teaching activity for the sake of teaching better and striving to learn and acquire professional understandings and skills (Butler, 2007). They have an endeavour to develop themselves as professionals.





2. To answer the second research question “*What are the inter-correlations among Turkish practicing ELT instructors’ goal orientations?*”, correlation analyses were conducted and the results are shown in Table 4, as below:

Table 4. Inter-correlations of Teacher Goal Orientations

	Mastery	Ability-Approach	Ability-Avoidance	Work-Avoidance
1- Mastery	1			
2- Ability-Approach	.071	1		
3- Ability-Avoidance	-.226	.254*	1	
4- Work-Avoidance	-.346**	.075	.517**	1

\*Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

According to Table 4, there was a significant negative correlation between mastery goal orientation and work-avoidance goal orientation ( $p < 0.01$ ). They are distinct goal orientations and they can be assessed as opposites of one another. Also, there was a significant and positive correlation between ability-avoidance goal and work-avoidance ( $p < 0.01$ ). This finding shows us that these two distinct goal orientations have similar features. In other words, holders of these orientations share common features such as showing little or no effort to carry out the tasks related to the profession.

3. To answer the third research question “*Is there a significant difference among goal orientations and the instructors’ gender, age, and degrees?*”, a series of non-parametric analyses were conducted.

Analyses comparing the scores of groups according to gender, and degree they hold with their goal orientations yielded only one significant difference ( $p < 0.05$ ) and it was related to academic degree. U-tests aiming to test the difference between degrees (BA-MA) showed that there was a significant difference between the scores of BA and MA holders in ability-avoidance dimension. Table 5 shows that BA holders tend to adopt more ability-avoidance goal orientations than MA holders ( $p < 0.05$ ).

Table 5. U-test scores of BA and MA Holders according to Ability-avoidance Orientation

Group	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks	U	P
BA	44	42.47	1169.00	179.00	.002
MA	17	26.57	722.00		





In addition, Mann Whitney U-test scores showed that there was not a significant difference between the scores of females and males with respect to their goal orientations ( $p>0.05$ ). Thus, it is possible to conclude that gender does not play an important role in their goal adoption.

In order to test whether there was a significant difference among instructors according to age group and universities, and teacher goal orientations, Kruskal Wallis H-tests for independent samples were conducted. It was found that there was not a significant difference among the scores of the participants according to age group and universities, and their goal orientation scores ( $p>0.05$ ).

## **CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS**

Studies on goal orientation theory have proliferated in the recent years which enabled to shed light on students' motivation to learn. In the recent years, researchers attempted to apply this framework to the teachers' motivation to teach which is very substantial in the quality of teaching processes, its outcomes, and students' learning.

The main striving of this present study is to have an understanding of English instructors' goal orientations for teaching. The results of the study showed that the participants of this present study; Turkish in-service ELT instructors, mostly adopt mastery goal orientation which is deemed as a more adaptive goal in the literature in that this goal is associated with autonomous help seeking, self-regulated learning and professional development. Likewise, they have low mean scores for ability-avoidance and especially for work-avoidance goal orientation which are associated with less adaptive behaviours such as minimizing effort required to fulfil academic and professional tasks.

In-service ELT instructors' mastery goal orientation was found to have a significant negative correlation with work-avoidance goal orientation, and their ability-avoidance goal orientation was significantly and positively correlated with work-avoidance. These findings also support that work-avoidance goal has some similarities with ability-avoidance goal both of which are associated with less adaptive patterns of behaviour.

Another finding of the study revealed that the participants who hold BA degree were more likely to adopt ability-avoidance goal orientation which is associated with negative patterns of motivation. Holding an MA degree which is not a must to be appointed as an instructor, is an individual endeavour to improve herself/himself. In order to have this degree, the candidates should carry out at least two years of study during which they have to write a thesis. This shows us that most of MA holders adopt mastery goal orientation and are likely to engage with more academic endeavours and to have more adaptive patterns to teach. These findings suggest in general that there was a relationship between degree they hold, and the goal orientations they adopt. These findings enhance our understanding of goal orientations and their motivation to teach.





Finally, a number of important limitations need to be considered. First, the number of participants and the number of universities were limited due to logistical restrictions which caused the reliability coefficients of the sub-scales to be at a low level; approximately .70. However, it should be noted that this limitation was also present in the original scales. Hence, the results may not be generalized to all in-service ELT instructors. Second, it did not investigate the correlation of goal orientations with other constructs such as help seeking, self-regulated learning, self-efficacy, etc. This can be another limitation of the study and further studies can enhance our understanding of teacher motivation by planning correlative projects.

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## Amaca Yönelim Bakış Açısı ile İngilizce Okutmanlarının Öğretme Motivasyonları

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### Genişletilmiş Özet

**Problem:** İkinci/Yabancı dil motivasyonunu araştıran çalışmalar temel olarak öğrencilerin öğrenme motivasyonlarına odaklanmışlardır. Bu çalışmalar öğretme sürecinde göz önünde bulundurulması gereken ilginç sonuçlar ortaya çıkartmışlardır. Ancak sınırlı sayıda çalışma öğrenme sürecinde çok önemli olan öğretmenlerin öğretme motivasyonuna ışık tutmaya çalışmıştır. Bununla beraber, öğretmen motivasyonunu amaca yönelim bakış açısı ile inceleyen çalışma sayısı da oldukça sınırlıdır. Ayrıca, yapılan alanyazın taramasının sonuçlarına göre Türkiye’de amaca yönelim teorisinin öğretmen motivasyonunu belirlemek için kullanılmadığı görülmüştür. Bu yüzden, bu çalışmanın amacı Türkiye’de çeşitli üniversitelerde çalışmakta olan İngilizce okutmanlarının motivasyon profillerini belirlemek için onların amaca yönelimlerini incelemektir.

**Yöntem:** Bu çalışmanın verisi 61 (K= 43; B=18) İngilizce okutmanının ayrı ayrı öğrenme, yetenek-yaklaşım, yetenek-kaçınma ve görev- kaçınma amaca yönelimleri ile ilgili maddeler içeren Başarı Amaca Yönelim Ölçeği ve demografik anketine verdiği bilgilerden oluşmaktadır. Çalışmanın katılımcıları Türkiye’deki 5 devlet üniversitesinde çalışan İngilizce okutmanlarıdır. Katılımcılara anketler 2010-2011 eğitim yılında daha önce her bir üniversiteden belirlenen temas kişisi tarafından ulaştırılmış ve anketler doldurulduktan sonra tekrar araştırmacılara geri gönderilmiştir. Toplanan veri SPSS istatistik programı kullanılarak betimsel istatistik, korelasyon ve parametrik olmayan istatistik analizleri ile çözümlenmiştir.

**Bulgular:** Çalışmanın bulguları Türk İngilizce okutmanlarının yüksek derecede öğrenme amaca yönelimine sahip olduklarını göstermiştir (O= 4.18; SS= 0.62). Öğrenme amaca yönelimi ve görev-kaçınma amaca yönelimi arasında önemli olumsuz korelasyon; yetenek-kaçınma ve görev- kaçınma amaç yönelimleri arasında önemli olumlu korelasyon vardır ( $p < 0.01$ ). Ayrıca, İngilizce okutmanlarının cinsiyet, diploma derecesi, yaş ve çalıştıkları üniversiteleri amaca yönelimleri ile karşılaştıran parametrik olmayan analizler sadece bir tane önemli sonuç ortaya çıkartmıştır. Mann Whitney U-testi lisans derecesine sahip İngilizce okutmanlarının yüksek lisans derecesine sahip meslektaşlarına göre daha fazla yetenek- kaçınma amaca yönelimine sahip olduklarını göstermiştir.





**Öneriler:** Dil öğretme dil öğrenme gibi çaba gerektiren bir iş olduğundan daha çok çaba gösterdiği bulgularla ortaya konulan öğrenme amaca yöneliminin önemi öğretmenlere ve okutmanlara anlatılmalı ve bu yönelime sahip olmalarının ne kadar önemli olduğu vurgulanmalıdır. Ayrıca, lisans ya da yüksek lisans mezunu olmanın amaca yönelim üzerindeki etkilerinden dolayı lisansüstü eğitime devam etme yönünde okutmanlar teşvik edilmelidir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Öğretmen motivasyonu, başarı motivasyonu, amaca yönelim, İngilizce okutmanları.

