



P-ISSN 2355-2794
E-ISSN 2461-0275

Motivation and Attitudes towards English Language Learning in Post-Revolution Tunisia: A Study Across Educational Levels

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Abstract

The present study explores two primary social psychological factors—motivation and attitudes—towards learning the English language across various educational levels following the 2011 revolution in Tunisia. Utilizing a mixed-method research approach, this study combined quantitative and qualitative data collection methods to gain comprehensive insights. An arbitrary sample of 170 students, from primary to secondary education and university levels, was surveyed using the Attitude/Motivation Test Battery. Additionally, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 9 students and 3 directors from three educational institutions. The study encompassed six key domains: (1) attitudes regarding English language learning, (2) motivation, (3) integrative motivation, (4) instrumental motivation, (5) parental involvement, and (6) attitudes towards language policies. The results indicate that students exhibited positive attitudes and high motivation toward learning English. Furthermore, the data revealed a positive orientation toward learning the English language in terms of integrative and instrumental motivation. Notably, instrumental motives were identified as the primary basis for students' motivation to learn English, slightly surpassing their integrative motivation. Moreover, a significant and positive correlation between attitude and motivation was observed. Conversely, the findings unveiled that all interviewees perceived educational policies as detrimental to English language learning. Their collective feedback underscored persistent challenges associated with English language education in school environments and society. Ultimately, all participants, either directly or indirectly, advocated for a heightened emphasis on the importance of English and called for a revision of language policies.

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Citation in APA style: Salah, R., & Parapatics, A. (2025). Motivation and attitudes towards English language learning in post-revolution Tunisia: A study across educational levels. *Studies in English Language and Education*, 12(1), 34-53.

Received August 1, 2024; Revised October 14, 2024; Accepted December 20, 2024; Published Online January 31, 2025

<https://doi.org/10.24815/siele.v12i1.40429>

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Keywords: Attitude, instrumental and integrative motivation, language policy, motivation, parental engagement.

1. INTRODUCTION

Following Tunisia's Independence in 1958, English was introduced into the educational landscape, creating a competitive dynamic with the dominant French language, an enduring legacy of the country's colonial past. While Arabic and French have long vied for prominence, English has gradually gained traction, beginning within the educational system and later expanding into professional and social domains (Daoud, 2001). However, despite its growing presence, English has often been considered secondary in Tunisia's language policy compared to French and Arabic. The 2011 revolution marked a significant turning point for Tunisia's educational and language policies. In response to increasing globalization and socio-political shifts, English became a mandatory subject across all academic levels, from the fourth grade in elementary schools to postgraduate studies at universities (Salah & Parapatics, 2023). This policy shift was driven by recognizing English as a critical language for academic advancement, international communication, and professional opportunities (Dridi et al., 2020). As Smari and Hortobágyi (2020, p. 222) highlight, "English is present at all levels in the Tunisian educational landscape".

Nevertheless, despite this policy change and the widespread incorporation of English into the curriculum, the proficiency levels among Tunisian students remain inconsistent. Previous research has primarily focused on the status of English in Tunisia and its competition with other languages. Yet, there has been limited exploration into how this evolving landscape has affected students' attitudes and motivations toward English learning factors widely acknowledged as crucial to language acquisition success (Dörnyei, 2001). Furthermore, studies often overlook how the post-2011 socio-political shifts have reshaped the educational motivations of Tunisian students and influenced their perceptions of English about their future prospects. Tunisia's unique sociopolitical and cultural context, characterized by rapid changes in language policies and public attitudes toward foreign languages, presents an unexamined research gap regarding how these transformations influence students' motivations and attitudes toward English learning.

This study aims to bridge the identified research gap by investigating the attitudes and motivations of Tunisian students towards learning English as a foreign language across different educational levels, particularly in the context of the post-2011 revolution. This research will also examine whether there are distinct types of motivation (e.g., integrative, instrumental, or parental encouragement) that predominantly drive Tunisian students' language learning. By addressing this gap, the study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of how socio-political changes have influenced language learning attitudes and motivations and offer recommendations for language policy and educational strategies.

The research seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What are students' attitudes and motivation towards the English language and its learning across different educational levels in post-revolution Tunisia?
2. What types of motivation (integrative, instrumental, or parental encouragement) are the primary sources of students' motivation for learning English?
3. Is there a significant difference in attitude and motivation towards learning English at different educational levels after the 2011 revolution?
4. What is the relationship between attitude, motivation, and external factors such as parental encouragement towards learning English in post-revolution Tunisia?
5. What are the expectations of Tunisian youth regarding the language policy of English language education in the post-Arab Spring era?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Language contact, according to [Thomason and Kaufman \(2001\)](#), is the mutual use of multiple languages in the same place and at the same time. When a speaker learns a new language, it becomes part of their stylistic repertoire. The chosen language is determined by a number of factors, including the topic, the social scene, the speakers' relative status, preferences, and attitudes ([Dweik & Qawar, 2015](#)). One of the most important aspects impacting language learning, according to [Gardner and Lambert \(1972\)](#), is the learners' attitude toward the target language. If a person has a positive perspective towards the target language and society, they want to join the language group and culture. Furthermore, they will consciously encourage themselves to fulfill their language learning objectives.

2.1 Exploring Language Attitudes in Tunisia: Shifts toward English and Implications for Language Learning

According to [Gardner \(2010\)](#), a pivotal factor influencing language acquisition is the learner's attitude toward the language they aim to acquire. When an individual holds a favorable view of the target language and its associated culture, they are more inclined to desire membership in that linguistic and cultural community. This positive perception subsequently motivates them to achieve their language learning goals. Language attitudes are "individuals' dispositions toward languages, reflecting broader social and cultural values" ([Garrett, 2010, p. 18](#)). In Tunisia, the well-acknowledged linguistic complexity and diversity ([Dridi et al., 2020](#); [Salah et al., 2020](#); [Salah & Parapatics, 2023](#)) necessitate an in-depth exploration of language attitudes and their implications for language learning.

Although English has been part of the Tunisian educational system since the post-independence period, research on language attitudes specifically focused on English remains relatively limited. [Aouina \(2013\)](#) examined the attitudes of Tunisian teachers and students, revealing that while teachers showed a more favorable disposition toward French, students demonstrated a more positive attitude toward English. This indicates that English is not replacing other languages in Tunisia but is gaining ground, particularly among younger generations who associate it with global advancement, technology, and science ([Salah & Parapatics, 2023](#)). More recent studies and projects showed that English is increasingly perceived as a tool for social mobility and professional opportunities. For instance, the British Council's "English for Employability" project in Tunisia emphasized the growing demand for English proficiency as a key skill for job seekers. The project aimed to improve language abilities among Tunisian youth to enhance their prospects in the global job market, underscoring the role of English in both vocational and higher education sectors ("English for Employability", n.d.). Similarly, [Melliti \(2012\)](#) explored the attitudes of Tunisian university students toward English, revealing that the majority view it as a key to academic success and access to international opportunities. These studies underscore a growing preference for English, driven by a desire to integrate into the global economy and educational community. In a broader regional context, [Iazzetta \(2024\)](#) conducted a comparative study of language attitudes in Tunisia and Morocco. He found that younger generations in Tunisia and Morocco are increasingly inclined toward English due to its perceived utility in higher education and employment. Their findings suggest that the shift toward English in the MENA region is influenced by similar socio-economic factors and changing educational policies, making it a valuable reference point for understanding the Tunisian case.

Moreover, the positive attitudes towards English in Tunisia are often linked to its status as a global lingua franca, facilitating cross-cultural exchanges and enhancing employability ([Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2021](#)). This is further evidenced by [Sellami-Sellami \(2021\)](#), which showed that Tunisian university students are increasingly motivated to learn English, as they believe proficiency in English offers a competitive edge in the job market. While earlier studies, such as those by [Jabeur \(1999\)](#) and [Aouina \(2013\)](#), primarily focused on general attitudes toward French and Arabic, recent research places more emphasis on the practical and socio-economic motivations behind the preference for English ([Boukadi & Troudi, 2017](#)). For example, in a

comparative study of language preferences, Bejaoui (2018) found that English enjoys greater cultural recognition than French and is viewed positively as a tool for global engagement. Despite this, ambivalent attitudes persist, with some individuals valuing the practical utility of English over its social prestige (Salah & Parapatics, 2023).

Understanding the relationship between students' attitudes and their motivation to learn English is crucial for educators and policymakers. Recent studies suggest that these attitudes are increasingly shaped by socioeconomic considerations, policy changes, and regional dynamics prioritizing English for academic and professional purposes. By addressing these emerging trends, this research provides valuable insights into how English reshapes language attitudes in Tunisia, thereby informing strategies for more effective language education policies and classroom practices.

2.2 Motivation and English Language Learning in Tunisia

The Latin verb *movere*, meaning 'to move', is the origin of the term motivation, a concept widely discussed in research and education. Despite numerous definitions, it is "surprising how little agreement there is in the literature regarding the exact meaning of this concept" (Al-Hoorie & MacIntyre, 2020, p. 11). Motivation is recognized as an essential component for achieving any objective and is particularly crucial for the success of acquiring a second or foreign language. Motivation theory and scientific inquiry focus on understanding what drives individuals to make specific decisions, take action, and persist in their endeavors (Ushioda, 2022). Motivation has garnered significant attention in second or foreign language learning, evolving through various theoretical perspectives.

Gardner (2010) defined motivation as "the extent to which the individual works or strives to learn the language because of a desire to do so and the satisfaction experienced in this activity" (p. 11). He emphasized that understanding learners' ultimate purpose or underlying reason for language acquisition referred to as the learner's orientation is key to grasping the source of their motivation. Gardner (2010) further distinguished between two types of language learning motivation: integrative and instrumental. Integrative motivation refers to the learner's desire to assimilate into the target language community and culture, which is critical for achieving proficiency. In contrast, instrumental motivation encompasses practical needs, such as career advancement, passing an exam, or improving social status. For example, in bilingual Montreal, integrative motivation is more closely associated with proficiency in French (Gardner, 2010).

Conversely, a study conducted in the Indian context highlighted the importance of instrumental motivation in attaining proficiency in English, suggesting that learners driven by practical needs may achieve higher English proficiency levels (Lamb, 2017). The dichotomy between integrative and instrumental motivation has been challenged by contemporary research that proposes a more nuanced understanding of motivation. Recent studies emphasized that both types of motivation can coexist and contribute to language learning success (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2021). In Tunisia, recent research underscored the pivotal role of instrumental motivation in motivating learners to acquire English. It is increasingly perceived as a gateway to better job prospects and global opportunities (Bassiouny, 2020).

Unlike traditional orientations that emphasized integrative motivation, the demand for English proficiency is now more closely tied to economic and social mobility, particularly among younger generations. This shift in motivation is further supported by studies in other MENA countries, where English is valued for its utility in education, science, and technology (Bassiouny, 2020). For instance, in Algeria, Benyoucef (2024) found that students prioritize English not only for the many opportunities to use it but also for its critical role in enhancing career prospects, mirroring trends observed in Tunisia. While integrative and instrumental motivations have traditionally been perceived as distinct categories, researchers now argue that they should be viewed as complementary. Dörnyei and Ryan (2015) proposed that integrative and instrumental motivations are not situated at opposite ends of a spectrum but exhibit a positive correlation, both serving as purposeful goals that can lead to language learning success. Similarly, Ryan (2019) contended that instrumental motivation may not have the same impact as integrative

motivation, but it often collaborates with it in a learner's educational journey. A growing body of research indicates that learners' motivations are complex and multifaceted, shaped by socioeconomic contexts and individual aspirations. For instance, a study made in Chile by [Kormos and Kiddle \(2013\)](#) revealed that students' motivation to learn English is significantly influenced by their socio-economic background, with those from more privileged environments exhibiting higher levels of instrumental motivation due to better access to resources and opportunities. This nuanced understanding is crucial for developing effective teaching strategies and policies to better align with learners' needs.

The consensus among researchers is that “negative attitudes toward the target language and its community may cause students' demotivation, while positive attitudes may increase the level of motivation” ([Deldeniya et al., 2018, p. 13](#)). Thus, in English language learning, motivation and attitude are closely intertwined and are thought to correlate strongly with language acquisition success ([Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2021](#); [Salah & Parapatics, 2023](#)). Given this complexity, exploring how these motivations have evolved in Tunisia's post-revolution context and their implications for language education policy is essential.

2.3 Language Policy in Tunisia

In the present era, language policy has become critical worldwide, encompassing various perspectives that vary from region to region. In Tunisian society, where approximately ninety-nine percent of the population identifies as Arab, Arabic is the primary language, albeit with significant variations in accents ([Boukadi & Troudi, 2017](#)). Following the French decolonization in 1956, French was established as the second language, significantly impacting the country's linguistic landscape. The French language has attained immense importance, particularly in education, where it has been a dominant medium of instruction. [Daoud \(2001\)](#) noted that “particularly since independence from France in 1956, Tunisians have experienced various interactions with the languages utilized in the social and work environment, the educational system, government, and media,” underscoring the complexities of language use in Tunisia.

In recent years, English, as one of the most powerful foreign languages, has gradually overtaken Arabic (L1) and French (L2), driven by technological expansion and global trends. [Harrabi \(2010\)](#) emphasized that “the growth of business and increased occupational mobility is resulting in a need for English as a common medium of communication,” indicating a shift in language priorities that aligns with changing societal needs. The discussion surrounding language policy in Tunisia remains unresolved, especially in education. Recent initiatives, such as the Arabization of scientific subjects and introducing English into the curriculum, have sparked debates over whether subjects like science should be taught in Arabic or French. Research by [Harat \(2020\)](#) highlighted that changing the language of instruction from French to Arabic and then back to French has negatively impacted the quality of education, shaping student attitudes toward these languages. Proponents of maintaining French argue that its historical and cultural significance has ensured its enduring presence in Tunisia.

Conversely, others advocate prioritizing English to enhance global engagement ([Boukadi & Troudi, 2017](#)). Recent studies emphasize the changing dynamics of language use in Tunisia. For instance, [Boukadi and Troudi \(2017\)](#) asserted that French continues to hold a significant position in education and professional domains due to historical ties. English is increasingly seen as vital for accessing global markets and opportunities. Moreover, [Kirkpatrick and Barnawi \(2017\)](#) supported the notion that English is gaining ground as a preferred medium in scientific and technological fields, thereby contributing to shifts in attitudes toward both French and English. [Daoud \(2001, p. 1\)](#) poignantly stated that “[s]uch experiences have produced discontinuities concerning language and literacy and helped to shape different attitudes towards these languages”. Language policy and planning in Tunisia are instrumental in shaping these experiences and attitudes, while simultaneously being influenced by them. Recent studies have shown that the evolving language policy in Tunisia affects the status of languages and impacts learners' motivations and attitudes toward English. For instance, [Kirkpatrick and Barnawi \(2017\)](#) indicated that changes in language policy, particularly the integration of English in educational

settings, have led to increased motivation among students who view English as essential for their career prospects.

This shift in policy and perception aligns with the growing recognition of English as a means to access global opportunities, further motivating learners to embrace the language. Language policy is present in every country and is influenced by various contexts and situations. It can serve as a motivating factor or a discouraging element for using specific languages or multilingualism. Furthermore, policies may be implemented to promote and protect a national language, which depends on multiple factors unique to each country and cannot be generalized (Boukadi & Troudi, 2017). Understanding these dynamics is essential for developing effective language education strategies that accommodate students' motivations and align with broader socio-economic goals in Tunisia.

3. METHODS

3.1 Research Approach and Design

The study adopts a cross-sectional mixed-methods research design with a sequential explanatory approach. This approach involved an initial quantitative phase followed by a qualitative phase. The quantitative phase utilized surveys to measure attitudes and motivation using a modified version of the Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB). The subsequent qualitative phase involved conducting semi-structured interviews to explore participants' views on English language policies and to provide additional context for interpreting the quantitative findings. This design allows for a comprehensive and in-depth understanding of the research problem by leveraging numerical data and detailed narratives.

3.2 Instruments

The primary instrument used for quantitative data collection was a modified version of the AMTB. The questionnaire comprised two sections, i.e., demographic information and main questionnaire items, where participants responded to a series of statements using a 6-point Likert scale. For example, statements were included to measure attitudes and motivations, such as "Learning English is really great", "If Tunisia had no contact with English-speaking countries, it would be a great loss", and questions like "My motivation to learn English is" ranging from very low (1) to very high (6), and "My parents encourage me to learn English" ranging from very little (1) to very much (6), etc. The scale ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree) to provide a finer differentiation in responses and increase the reliability of the results.

Besides, semi-structured interviews were conducted, too. A set of open-ended questions was developed for qualitative data collection to delve deeper into participants' perspectives on English language education and policy. The interviews included demographic information and research-related questions, such as "Do you think that English is an important language to learn? If yes, can you explain why?" and "Can you describe your attitudes towards English learning? (positive or negative)". Other questions included participants' thoughts on the English education policy, such as "What do you think about English's education policy?" and "Are there any differences between language education policy (LEP) before and after the revolution towards English?". These questions were designed to explore participants' views on the significance of English in Tunisia and how it relates to their attitudes and motivation toward learning the language.

3.3 Data Collection Method

3.3.1 Participants and sampling

The study targeted 200 participants from various educational levels, including primary, secondary, and university students. Due to incomplete responses, the final sample consisted of 170 participants: 50 primary school students, 43 high school students, and 77 university students in Tunis, Tunisia. The 170 respondents were 85 males, 84 females, and one student without marking the gender, aged 6 to 19+ years. They were in different years of study ranging from the 6th grade in primary school to the 3rd grade in university. Three adults, including two directors and one deputy principal, were interviewed. The interviewees were four females and eight males. The sampling was purposive to ensure a representation of different educational levels, which facilitated comparisons between stages of English language learning. The participants' linguistic profiles demonstrate that they learned their languages in the same sequence. They are all native Tunisian Arabic speakers who learned Modern Standard Arabic in school or before age six at a religious school (Kuttab) or in primary school (Tahdhiri) as a preparatory stage. They began studying French at the age of eight. Following that, students learned English at nine or 10 years old, and directors learned it at the age of 14 years old. Students often complete elementary school speaking four languages.

3.3.2 Data collection procedures

As mentioned above, data collection took place from October 18th to November 3rd, 2021, at three educational institutions in Tunisia. The first author of the present paper coordinated with school authorities to secure permissions and support for the study. The questionnaire was distributed to students during regular class sessions, with the researcher explaining the objectives and providing clear instructions on how to complete the questionnaire. The participants were assured of anonymity and confidentiality and were encouraged to respond honestly. The teachers played a vital role by distributing the questionnaires during their regular class sessions, which allowed the researchers to reach a large number of students and achieve a high response rate. After completing the surveys, students voluntarily participated in interviews immediately after their classes. The interviews were recorded using a phone for documentation purposes.

3.4 Data Analysis

3.4.1 Quantitative data analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS 26.0) software, which involved two stages. These stages—descriptive statistics and inferential statistics—are elaborated in the following subsections.

a. Descriptive statistics

Frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations were calculated to summarize the data. The interpretation of mean scores for students' attitudes and motivational levels was conducted by established guidelines for English language acquisition, drawing from sources such as [Salah and Parapatics \(2023\)](#), as indicated in Table 1.

Table 1. Explanation of 6-point Likert scale.

Scale	Mean range	Score range	Motivation level	Attitude level
6	Strongly agree	5.17 – 6	Highest	Very positive
5	Agree	4.33 – 5.16	High	Positive
4	Slightly agree	3.50 – 4.32	Slightly high	Slightly positive
3	Slightly disagree	2.67 – 3.49	Slightly low	Slightly negative

Table 1 continued...

2	Disagree	1.84 – 2.66	Low	Negative
1	Strongly disagree	1.00 – 1.83	Lowest	Very negative

The mean score for each question indicates the students' level of motivation and attitude. A high score signifies high motivation and a strongly positive attitude, while a low score indicates lower motivation and a negative attitude.

b. Inferential statistics

Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) and Tukey's HSD tests were used to examine differences in motivation and attitude across different educational stages. Pearson Correlation Coefficient was used to assess the strength and direction of the relationships between the key variables, such as attitude, motivation, integrative motivation, instrumental motivation, and parental engagement across the three educational levels. This analysis provided insights into whether positive or negative correlations existed between these variables and helped us understand their interdependencies.

3.4.2 Qualitative data analysis

The qualitative data from interviews were analyzed using a systematic coding process:

- Initial coding: interview transcripts were read thoroughly, and initial codes were generated based on emerging themes related to language attitudes and motivations.
- Thematic analysis: codes were grouped into broader categories, and themes were developed to capture recurring patterns in participants' views.
- Interpretation: the themes were reviewed about the quantitative findings to provide a richer, context-driven interpretation of the study's results.

By employing this multi-layered analysis approach, the study integrates numerical data and in-depth qualitative insights, offering a robust understanding of the factors influencing English language learning across various educational stages in Tunisia.

4. RESULTS

4.1 Students' Attitudes and Motivation Levels toward the English Language and Its Learning

Calculating the mean of the responses and the Standard Deviation (SD) in each class and tabulating them led to the figures and tables from each questionnaire. Responses within each of the five categories in the questionnaire were analyzed and interpreted. The 6-point Likert scale used in this study assumes an average rating of 3.50 as positive and 2.8 negative.

Table 3. The overall mean of students' attitude and motivation.

	Sum of mean	Total mean	SD	Level
Attitude	121.78	4.87	0.641	Positive attitude
Motivation	138.83	4.96	0.570	High motivation

As Table 3 indicates, the overall mean of attitude (4.87) and motivation (4.96) is closer to 5, implying that the attitudes and motivation are positive and high. What is interesting to notice is that the scores between attitude and motivation in general show no drastic differences.

4.2 Students' Types of Motivation for Learning English

From the three motivational constructs, namely instrumental motivation, integrative motivation, and parental engagement, that have been the focus of the present study, it was found that Tunisian youth students have about equal integrative and instrumental drive to learn English, with average mean scores of 5.085 and 5.168, respectively. Their instrumental motivation to study English almost reached an immensely high mean (5.168), surpassing their integrative motivation by 0.083. On the other hand, Tunisian youth students expressed that they are slightly highly motivated by their parents toward learning English with $M = 4.262$. These results are summarized in Table 4.

Table 4. The overall mean of students' integrative and instrumental motivation.

	Sum of mean	Total mean	SD	Level
Integrative motivation	71.20	5.085	0.675	High motivation
Instrumental motivation	51.71	5.168	0.634	High motivation
Parental engagement	21.31	4.262	1.253	Slightly High

4.3 The Difference in Attitude and Motivation towards Learning the English Language at Different Educational Levels

To test the statistical significance of the differences on the whole the ANOVA test was carried out to investigate differences between the groups (henceforth, GR). The data obtained show that the differences between the means of the 5 series are statistically significant (all p-values are less than 0.01). To determine the difference between the two groups (Group 1: primary school, Group 2: secondary education, and Group 3: university), a Tukey post hoc test was conducted. Several differences were found between the means of the 5 series and the 3 levels of education.

According to the Tukey post hoc test, results manifested a significant difference only in GR2 for attitude/motivation/instrumental and integrative motivation. The difference could be visible from the means plot figures below (Figures 1, 2, 3, and 4) where the swings in attitude and motivational factors are remarkable in GR2.

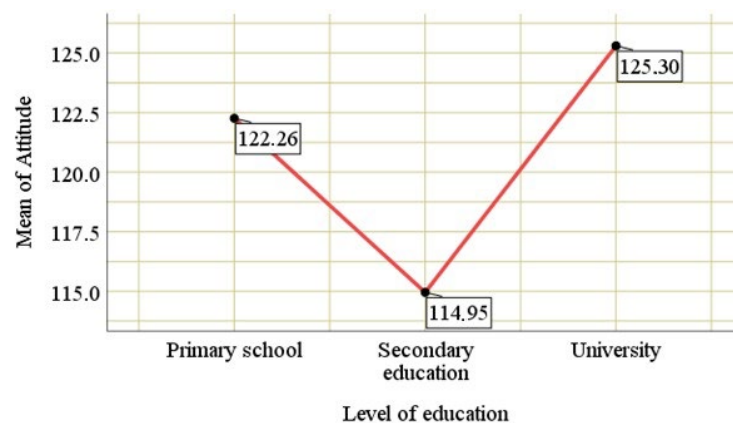


Figure 1. Attitude means of students at three different levels of education.

When comparing the mean attitudes of students learning English across educational levels, university students (GR3) scored the highest with $M = 125.30$. Primary school students (GR1) followed with the second-highest mean score of $M = 122.26$, indicating a positive attitude. Although secondary school students (GR2) had the lowest mean score ($M = 114.95$), their attitude toward learning English remained positive.

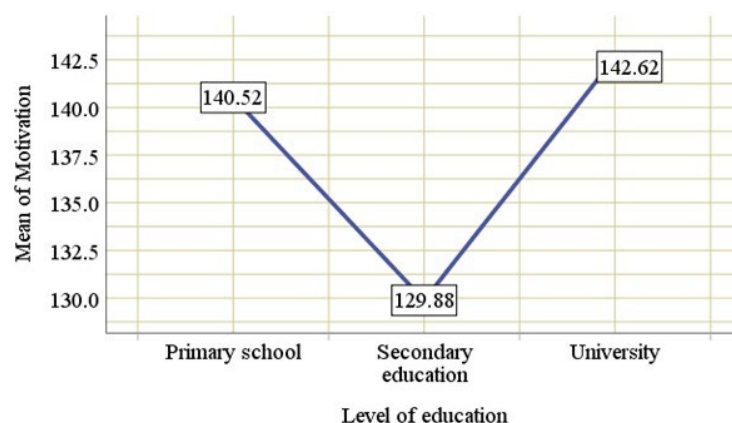


Figure 2. Motivation means of students at three different levels of education.

Figure 2 shows that students across all educational levels demonstrated high motivation for learning English. University students (GR3) achieved the highest mean score ($M = 142.62$), followed by primary school students (GR1) with a mean score of $M = 140.52$. Secondary school students (GR2) had the lowest mean score ($M = 129.88$), though their motivation remained strong.

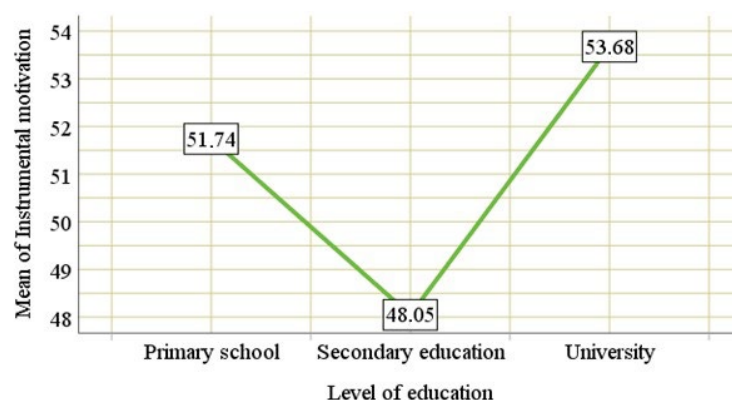


Figure 3. Instrumental motivation means of students at three different levels of education.

Figure 3 shows that students in Groups 1 and 3 have the highest instrumental motivation for learning English, with mean scores of $M = 51.74$ and $M = 53.68$, respectively. In comparison, Group 2 received a mean score of $M = 48.05$, indicating slightly lower motivation. Overall, the data demonstrate that Tunisian students exhibit high instrumental motivation.

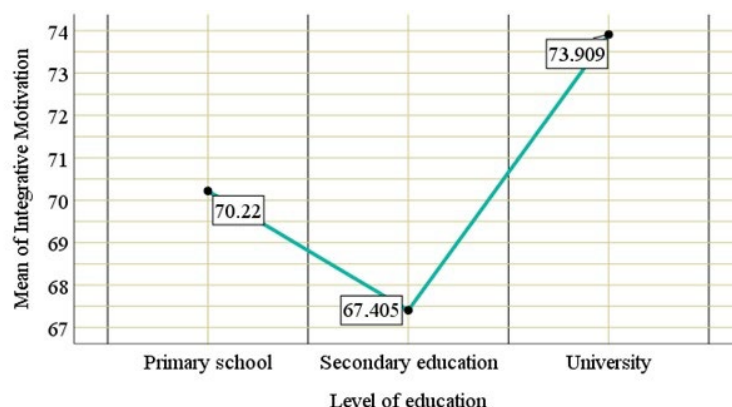


Figure 4. Integrative motivation means of students at three different levels of education.

Figure 4 reveals interesting findings regarding students' integrative motivation for learning English. Primary and secondary students (Groups 1 and 2) showed high motivation with mean scores of $M = 70.22$ and 67.405 , respectively. However, university students (GR3) demonstrated the highest integrative motivation with $M = 73.909$.

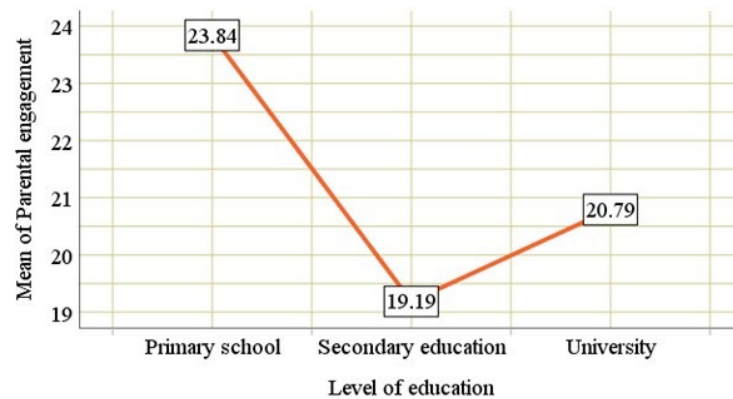


Figure 5. Parental engagement means of students at three different levels of education.

A striking finding was attributed to the parental engagement factor where the difference lies between GR2 and GR3 towards GR1. Figure 5 resembles a reversed figure of all other variables (attitude, motivation, instrumental motivation, integrative motivation).

As it is clear in Figure 5, Group 1 received the highest mean score (23.84), indicating that primary school students are highly motivated by their parents. However, the study reveals that learners from Groups 2 and 3 also show slightly high parental motivation to learn English. The following section discusses the relationship between the variables declared within this research's framework.

4.4 The Relationship between Attitude, Motivation, Instrumental, Integrative Motivation, and Parental Engagement towards Learning English from Different Educational Levels

The result of the analysis using the Pearson r correlation, as presented in Table 5, shows that all variables have a positive and significant relationship.

Table 5. The Pearson Correlation Coefficient between the variables of all educational levels.

Correlations					
All levels of education	1	2	3	4	5
1. Attitude	1				
2. Integrative motivation	.702**	1			
3. Instrumental motivation	.737**	.695**	1		
4. Parental engagement	.205**	.072	.198**	1	
5. Motivation	.756**	.858**	.842**	.501**	1

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
 * . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Due to this setting, a simple linear regression analysis was used to investigate the effect the independent variables have on the dependent ones. The scatterplot figures (Figures 6, 7, 8, and 9) show that an increase in attitude, integrative, instrumental motivation, and parental engagement would lead to a higher motivation for English language learning.

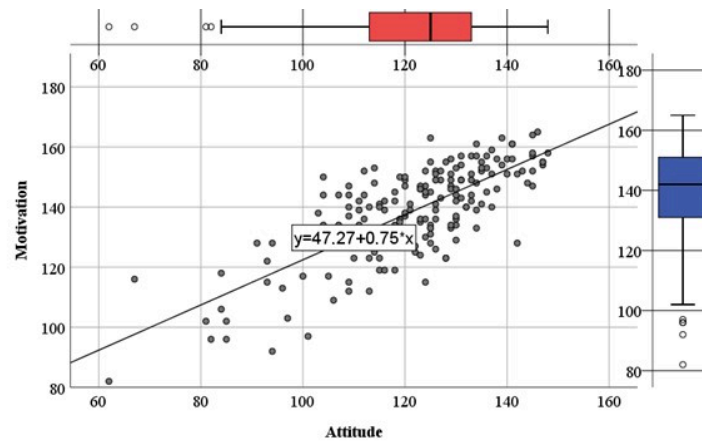


Figure 6. Scatterplot figure of the relationship between attitude and motivation.

The predicted motivation of participants can be expressed as $47.269 + 0.752 \cdot (\text{attitude})$. This indicates that, on average, participants' motivation for learning English increases by 0.752 for each unit increase in the behavioral belief of attitude. The scatter plot in Figure 6 illustrates a positive linear relationship between attitude and motivation, where higher attitudes are associated with greater motivation. Additionally, the data points display a consistent spread along the regression line, without evidence of a cone-shaped or curved pattern. This consistency confirms the assumptions of homoscedasticity and linearity.

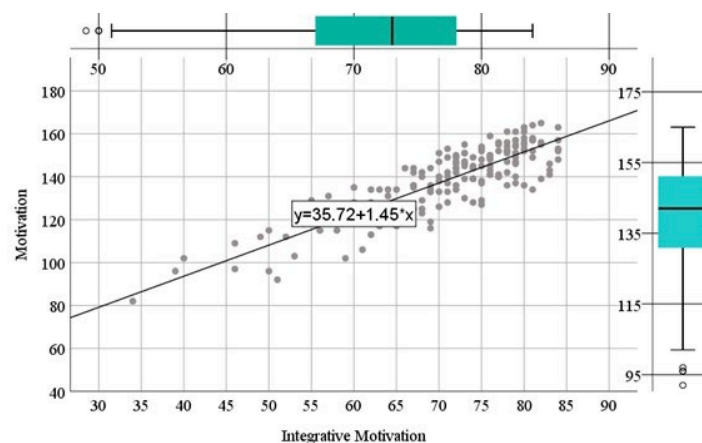


Figure 7. Scatterplot figure of the relationship between integrative motivation and motivation.

From the scatterplot in Figure 7, we conclude that the two variables (motivation and integrative motivation) exhibit a positive correlation, moving in the same direction—i.e., as X increases, Y also increases. The regression line equation, $y = 35.72 + 1.45 \cdot x$, provides the best fit for the data points.

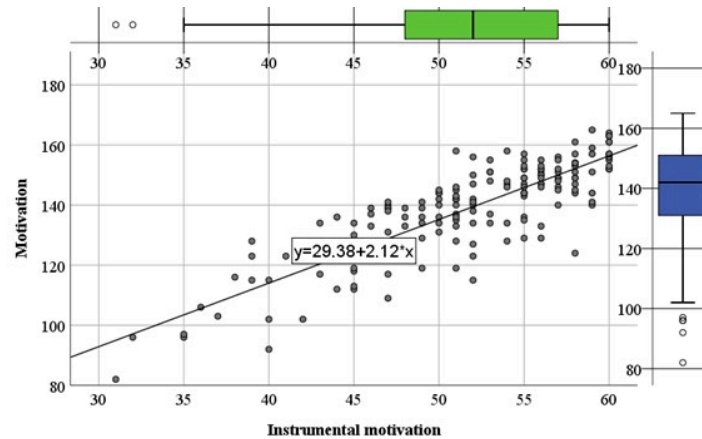


Figure 8. Scatterplot figure of the relationship between instrumental motivation and motivation.

The scatterplot in Figure 8 indicates that participants' predicted motivation can be modeled by the equation $y = 29.38 + 2.12x$ (instrumental motivation). This implies that participants' average motivation for learning English increases by 2.12 units for each unit increase in their level of instrumental motivation.

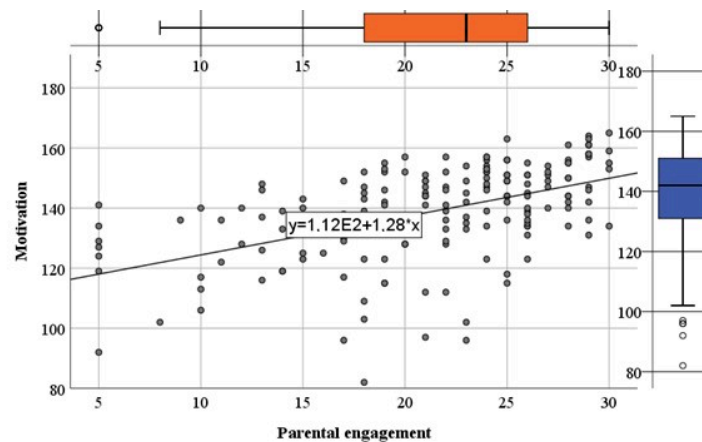


Figure 9. Scatterplot figure of the relationship between parental engagement and motivation.

According to Figure 9, participants' predicted motivation is represented by the equation $y = 112 + 1.28x$ (parental engagement). This indicates that participants' average motivation for learning English increases by 1.28 units for each unit increase in parental engagement.

4.5 The Expectations of Tunisian Youth about the Language Policy of English Language Education

In this section, key findings are presented from the 12 interviews conducted with educational institution heads (3 subjects) and student groups (3 interviewees in 3 groups by educational levels = 9 subjects). It is important to note that the insights presented here are general and will serve as a foundation for a future article that will focus exclusively on the perspectives of the 12 participants. The forthcoming article will delve deeper into the nuanced responses and viewpoints provided by the interviewees, shedding light on their unique insights and experiences in education. A coding system was employed in the study to ensure participant anonymity, with identifiers based on group, location, role (student or director), and interview number. For instance, codes like GR1D01 and GR2S03 signify specific details: the former refers to a director in group 1, primary school, interview 1, while the latter indicates a student in group 2, secondary education,

interview 3. The participants' linguistic profiles demonstrate that they learned their languages in the same sequence (see Section 3.3.1).

In the course of the qualitative analysis of the twelve interviews, five themes emerged. The themes that emerged are as follows: 1) English is seen as relevant in the curriculum of Tunisian education, 2) English as the medium language of instruction, 3) context and administration of the 2019/2020 English program in 4th grade, 4) students' perspectives, and 5) a call for a change in language policy.

Furthermore, the interview results shed light on the motivation factors that drive Tunisian learners to study English. Almost all the responses favored instrumental motivation, particularly, and other goals in general. The present research discovered that Tunisian youth students associate their professional success and growth with their ability to learn English. In the following, some of the students' comments are cited.

- (1) 'Yes, I enjoy learning the language since it will allow me to work as an airline hostess in the future' [GR1S01]. 'Nowadays, knowing ENG is required. For instance, if you want to apply for a job, they will question you about your ENG proficiency on the first day of the interview... Moreover, if you're going to buy a phone, you will read the instructions in a small book in ENG, cars are written in ENG, street signs, outfits'. (GR3S03)

In contrast to the questionnaires' positive results, students and directors showed a negative attitude toward the language education policy in learning English. When inquiring about the recent language policy, regarding the inclusion of English in the curriculum starting from the fourth grade in the 2019/2020 program, the response received was as follows:

- (2) 'What! One hour! [laughs] ENG language must be taught from Tahdhiri [a preparatory stage before primary school – the author's comment] at the age of 5 years because it is the best period in which the child learns the language well and not from the fourth grade'. (GR2D01)
- (3) 'Of course, I have a negative attitude [...] the state does not make any changes. I don't know if this is a choice or by force. The state has been indirectly subject to France since the time of colonialism. Interests and other things are going under the table that do not make us change... ENG is not promoted at all unfortunately I don't know why'. (GR3S01)

In general, it was observed that the students had a positive attitude and motivation toward learning ENG. The recorded comments indicated that students had higher instrumental motivation toward ENG learning than integrative motivation. Consistent with the questionnaire results, the majority of respondents stated that their motivation stems from more functional or external demands, such as the desire to pass exams or job opportunities. In other words, instrumental motivation was seen as the key source of students' drive to study ENG. At the same time, a tone of criticism or even complaint could be inferred from the directors and students' remarks when discussing their attitudes toward the ENG language policy. All participants complained that ENG is not given enough importance. However, the interviewees proposed several reforms to the Tunisian educational system. For example:

- (4) 'If they ask me to pick only one of my proposals, I would go with changing ENG as the medium language instead of French'. (GR3S02)
- (5) 'They must build more language training centers for ENG since it is currently the most valued language in the world; otherwise, why not focus on the other foreign languages most commonly used by Tunisians, such as Spanish, Italian, and German... Make ENG, after Arabic, Tunisia's second language... Teach ENG from the first grade, and why not teach the three languages together (MSA/FR/ENG)? Don't tell me it's too much for a 6-year-old student since youngsters in other developed nations can create a phone, but in Tunisia, he can't master three languages?'. (GR3S03)

5. DISCUSSION

In addressing the first research question, the findings indicate that Tunisian students exhibit a strong positive attitude and high motivation towards learning the English language. These

results are consistent with previous research, demonstrating that motivation and attitude are closely intertwined and challenging to differentiate. The positive attitude observed among Tunisian youth may be largely influenced by their level of motivation. This relationship is supported by Ager (2001), who suggests that there is a hierarchical connection between the two concepts, where motivation precedes and shapes attitudes, ultimately impacting language acquisition behavior. Similarly, Dörnyei (2020) emphasizes that positive attitudes toward language learning can greatly enhance motivation and overall success in acquiring a new language. In contrast, negative attitudes often lead to decreased motivation and hinder language learning outcomes. Given the interdependence between motivation and attitudes, it becomes clearer that the strong motivation and positive attitudes toward English among Tunisian students are mutually reinforcing. Furthermore, this high level of motivation and favorable outlook reflect the societal value placed on foreign language proficiency in Tunisian culture, where mastery of a foreign language is often associated with educational and professional advancement (Dridi et al., 2020; Salah & Parapatics, 2023). In both, the questionnaire and the interview, students showed positive attitudes and high motivation toward learning the English language.

In response to the second research question, it is essential to analyze the different motivational factors driving students' engagement with the English language. The study revealed that Tunisian students are nearly equally driven by both instrumental ($M = 5.168$) and integrative ($M = 5.085$) motivations. However, a closer examination shows that students are slightly more motivated instrumentally to learn English, as reflected in both the questionnaire responses and the interview data. This suggests that the practical benefits associated with English learning, such as career opportunities, further education, and access to global resources, may hold greater influence over the students' motivation compared to integrative factors. This finding aligns with established research in this field, indicating that students often possess multiple motivations simultaneously, which are not easily distinguishable. The results further demonstrate that the students' instrumental motivation is consistent with prior literature and empirical studies that highlight similar patterns in other contexts (e.g. Al-Tamimi & Shuib, 2009; Alzubeiry, 2012; Salah & Parapatics, 2023). Nevertheless, while both forms of motivation are present, it is the instrumental orientation that slightly outweighs the integrative in this specific cohort. Interestingly, the lowest mean score in this research was attributed to parental encouragement ($M = 4.262$), suggesting that while students recognize and value their parents' support, it is not a predominant factor influencing their motivation to learn English. This contrasts with some prior studies where parental influence has been shown to play a more significant role in shaping students' attitudes and motivation toward foreign language learning. In the context of the present study, it appears that Tunisian students' motivation to learn English is more self-driven and aligned with personal or professional aspirations rather than external familial expectations. Given this emphasis on instrumental motivation, educational institutions could benefit from tailoring English language programs to highlight the pragmatic advantages of English proficiency, such as enhanced career prospects, academic advancement, and access to global communication. At the same time, integrating opportunities for cultural exchange and engagement could help boost students' integrative motivation, thereby promoting a more holistic language learning experience. In summary, while Tunisian students exhibit both integrative and instrumental motivations, it is the instrumental motivation that serves as the primary source driving their interest in English learning. Parental encouragement, although present, plays a comparatively minor role in their overall motivational framework.

In response to the third research question, it is essential to consider the broader range of factors that shape learners' attitudes and drive their motivation. Various studies have identified diverse elements, including personality traits, educational settings, and social influences (Ehrman, 1996; McDonough et al., 2013; Spolsky, 1989). The present study, through its mixed-method approach, revealed that motivation is impacted by multiple dimensions, such as classroom settings (learning materials, teaching methods, learning environment), individual characteristics of the students, and overarching language education policies. A key finding of this research relates to the role of parental engagement, where differences were noted between various educational groups (GR2 and GR3 compared to GR1). This variation highlights that parental influence may

not be uniformly perceived or impactful across different educational stages. The divergence in the results could be explained by the learners' broader social contexts. According to Spolsky (1989), language learning is inherently social as it occurs within specific social contexts, even though it remains an individual endeavor. Social factors, while not directly affecting language learning, can have a pronounced and observable impact on learners' attitudes and motivation. In this study, parental engagement emerged as one of the crucial social contexts influencing students' attitudes. Moreover, prior research by Larsen-Freeman and Long (2014) supports the idea that parental attitudes towards a language significantly shape learners' perspectives and motivation to learn that language. This influence extends beyond mere encouragement, as parental views and dispositions toward the target language often mirror the learners' own attitudes, creating a parallel relationship. Thus, the findings of the current study suggest that parental engagement should be recognized as a powerful social determinant of motivation, particularly in shaping how learners perceive and approach English learning. Overall, the results of the study indicate that while classroom settings and individual student characteristics play critical roles, the influence of parental engagement stands out as a significant factor. This suggests that educational institutions and policymakers should consider strategies to actively involve parents in the language learning process to foster positive attitudes and sustained motivation among students. Initiatives such as parent-student workshops, language learning seminars, and community events could serve to enhance parental engagement and consequently improve students' attitudes and motivation in learning English. In summary, the factors influencing learners' attitudes and motivation in the context of English language learning include classroom settings, individual characteristics, and social contexts particularly parental engagement. These findings underscore the complexity of language learning motivation and highlight the need for a holistic approach that considers the broader educational and social ecosystems surrounding the learners.

In addressing the fourth research question, this study uncovered a notable relationship among these variables across primary school, secondary education, and university students. Specifically, a strong and positive correlation was identified between attitudes, motivation, and both instrumental and integrative motivations within each educational level, demonstrating consistency in how these elements interact regardless of the students' educational stage. Upon comparing the correlation scores of the five variables, the study found no significant differences in the R-values for learning English across the three educational groups, indicating a stable relationship between attitude and the different types of motivation. However, the parental engagement factor stood out with either very low or moderately weak correlation values in contrast to the other variables, suggesting a divergence in how parental engagement influences language learning at different educational levels. As the correlation values approach zero, the relationship between variables becomes weaker, which was the case for parental engagement compared to attitude, instrumental, and integrative motivation across primary, secondary, and university levels. The variation in the strength of parental engagement's correlation may be attributed to several factors. Gardner (1985) emphasizes that, beyond the learner's personality and the social and educational contexts, other factors like age can significantly influence language learning outcomes. This insight aligns with the findings of Chambers and Trudgill (1998), who noted that age and peer social pressures can alter the impact of parental influence. In this study, primary school students demonstrated a higher correlation with parental engagement compared to their secondary and university counterparts, which could be explained by the greater reliance on parents and lower susceptibility to peer influences at younger ages. As students progress through the educational stages, peer group social pressures increase, leading to a gradual decline in the influence of parental engagement on motivation and attitudes towards English learning.

The implications of these findings are significant, suggesting that while attitude and motivation (both instrumental and integrative) are consistently correlated across different educational levels, the role of parental engagement diminishes as students grow older and are more influenced by their peers and social environment. This outcome emphasizes the importance of recognizing the changing dynamics of motivation factors over time and adapting strategies to support students accordingly. Educational institutions and policymakers could consider this developmental shift when designing programs and interventions to enhance motivation and

language learning. For younger students, initiatives to involve parents actively in language learning activities might be effective in bolstering motivation. However, for older students, programs that focus on peer influence, social engagement, and self-directed learning could be more beneficial. Thus, a nuanced approach that considers the evolving influence of parental engagement is crucial for fostering sustained motivation and positive attitudes toward English learning across different educational levels. In summary, while the correlation between attitude, motivation, and types of motivation (instrumental and integrative) remains robust across the educational stages, the influence of parental engagement diminishes as students move from primary school to higher education levels. This finding highlights the need to adapt motivational strategies based on the learners' developmental stage and social context to optimize language learning outcomes.

The fifth research question examined the impact the ENG language policy on modifying language attitudes among Tunisian students and educators. The interview results indicated that Tunisians possess ambivalent attitudes towards English, which are influenced by factors such as language policy, sociocultural context, and individual experiences. While English is viewed positively for its utility in professional and academic advancement, these attitudes are shaped and sometimes hindered by overarching language policies and limited opportunities for language use within the educational system. The participants noted that language planning and policy can significantly impact people's attitudes toward a particular language. They suggested that policies that promote multilingualism and encourage the practical use of English could positively influence attitudes and motivation. However, they also acknowledged the challenges faced in implementing such policies effectively, especially in regions where French is predominant and has a strong influence on educational and social contexts. An interesting finding from the study is the notion that attitudes are not static and can be changed through experience, exposure, and enhanced language policies. Participants mentioned that their negative attitudes could shift if they had more opportunities to use English in meaningful and practical ways. This highlights the dynamic nature of language attitudes and the possibility for positive change with the right support and resources. Participants highlighted that language planning and policy reforms could significantly influence people's attitudes toward English. They proposed various changes to policymakers, including promoting English through multilingual programs and providing more opportunities for practical use within and beyond the classroom. Such initiatives, they argued, would contribute to more positive attitudes and stronger motivation to learn the language. However, they also recognized that implementing these reforms would be challenging due to sociocultural barriers and the entrenched status of other languages in Tunisia.

6. CONCLUSION

The primary aim of this study was to investigate the role of motivation and attitudes in English language learning among Tunisian students across different educational levels. The research findings reveal that, while both integrative and instrumental motivations are crucial in language acquisition, Tunisian students displayed a slightly stronger inclination towards instrumental motivation compared to integrative motivation. This result challenges the traditional assumption by Gardner that integrative motivation is the most significant predictor of success in second or foreign language learning. Additionally, students showed a moderate level of parental encouragement, highlighting the multifaceted nature of their motivation. The research also uncovered differences in attitudes and motivation factors among the three educational levels, demonstrating that students' educational stages impact their motivation and attitudes toward English. Despite these variations, the study found a generally positive attitude toward English among students and directors alike, though participants expressed a negative attitude towards current educational policies in Tunisia post-2011 Jasmine Revolution. This complex dynamic indicates that Tunisian students and educational leaders hold ambivalent language attitudes, favoring English but being dissatisfied with the policy framework governing its instruction.

The findings of this study should be interpreted with caution due to several limitations. Firstly, there is a lack of comprehensive literature in Tunisian contexts, particularly in French and Arabic, which restricted the scope of comparative analysis. The accessibility of data also posed a significant challenge, as some Tunisian governmental websites, including the Ministry of Education's portal, were not accessible from Hungary, limiting the data collection process. Additionally, the sample was limited to students in the capital of Tunisia, which may not fully represent the perspectives of students from other regions. The responses from university students, who study in English for tourism-related programs, might have positively skewed their attitudes toward English compared to students at the primary and secondary levels. Given these limitations, further research is needed to expand the scope of inquiry and include a more diverse sample of participants from various regions of Tunisia. Future studies should also explore the impact of sociocultural and political factors on language attitudes more comprehensively. There is a critical need for more localized research published in French and Arabic to bridge the gap in literature and offer more robust comparisons. To enhance the effectiveness of English language learning, several recommendations are proposed based on the study's findings: reevaluation of language policies, strengthening the learning environment and promoting positive language attitudes. By addressing these areas, policymakers, educators, and researchers can work together to create a more supportive and effective language learning environment that aligns with Tunisia's evolving educational landscape.

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