

Investigating Students' Attitude and Motivation in Learning English as a Second Language among Four Higher Institutions in Malaysia

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to examine the students' motivation and attitude towards learning English as a second language from four Malaysian higher institutions. A random sampling of 471 respondents participated in this study. Using 28 items instrument, adapted from Gardner's Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB), an online questionnaire was distributed in getting the data. Students' motivational level is found to be high with ($M=6.37$, $SD=0.77$, $M=6.10$, $SD=0.82$). Additionally, the respondents are having positive attitudes in learning English ($M=4.07$, $SD=0.48$). With the findings, it is a hope that this can be a guidance for instructors to design a suitable lesson and approach to be used in the class.

ARTICLE INFO

Paper type:

Empirical Research Article

Article history:

Received: 15 February 2020

Revised: 6 April 2020

Accepted: 7 April 2020

Keywords:

- Gardner's Attitude Motivation Test Battery
- Investigative Motivation
- Instrumental Motivation

1. Introduction

A lot of studies have been conducted in measuring students' motivation and attitudes in the learning process (Ryan & Deci, 2000; Wijnia, Loyens, & Derou,s 2010; Kocakoglu, Turkmen, & Solak 2010). Motivation is regarded as one of the significant variables to be measured in the process of language learning (Liang & Kelsen, 2018). In addition, it is imperative to investigate the students' motivation in learning the second language acquisition as it is a drive-in achieving and completing any activity (Hall, 2011). Instructors should be able to identify the students' motivation and attitude in helping them to prepare the appropriate activity or approach to be conducted in class. With the appropriate activities and approach, the students would be able to boost their proficiency and enhance their interest to learn the language.

English is considered a second language in Malaysia as this country is one of the ex-colonies of the United Kingdom (Thirusanku & Melor, 2012). Students are exposed to the language since they are in their kindergarten. They are learning English even they are at their university level. Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM), Universiti Tun Hussein Onn (UTHM), Universiti Sains Islam Malaysia (USIM), and Universiti Malaysia Pahang (UMP), are among the public universities in Malaysia. As one of the graduation requirements, the students need to achieve at least Band (level) three in the Malaysian University English Test (MUET).

Unfortunately, the number of students who achieve band 3 is not more than 50% since 2012 (Majlis Peperiksaan Malaysia, 2019). In helping the students with band 1 and 2, preparatory classes and MUET clinics have been conducted in making sure that the students are getting better grades or pass at least band three. However, the results remain unsatisfactory. They perform much unfavorable behavior such as not taking seriously in learning the language, or do not show high interest in the class, which demonstrate that they are lacking the motivation to learn English (Normazidah, Koo, & Hazita, 2012) and do well in their MUET (Othman & Nordin, 2013).

Motivation is being accepted as one of the main factors which influence the percentage and achievement of second language acquisition (McDonough, 1983; Ellis, 1994). Nevertheless, motivation is a challenging concept as what being described by Gardner (2006) “motivation is a very complex phenomenon with many facets... Thus, it is not possible to give a simple definition”.

Motivation leads people to keep on working, accomplishing tasks, and realizing goals in their life. Motivation is understood as a concept associated with inter-forces such as instincts, traits, volition, and will (Schunk, Pintrich, and Meece, 2008). Furthermore, motivation is more associated with the learner's choices. Constructivists' definition of motivation is emphasizing on social contexts along with the individual's decisions (Brown, 2000). Motivation involves goals, activities/tasks, planning, making a decision, and solving problems (Schunk, Pintrich, and Meece, 2008). Students with motivation have their choices to choose what they want to learn, how to improve their learning process, and work on the chosen plans.

Motivation is part of the learning process. Motivation influences what, when, and how a student learns. If an approach used in class could motivate students to learn better, this could lead the students to obtain a better grade. A motivated student will engage himself with the class activities and involve in the process learning by following any instructions given, completing tasks and involve in any learning discussion (Zimmerman, 2000 in (Schunk, Pintrich, and Meece, 2008).

Dornyei (2002) and Gardner (1985) categorised motivation into two types, integrative and instrumental motivations. Instrumental reason is when a student learns a language for certain drives such as to get the promotion of their profession. In contrast, the integrative reason is when a student learns a language to establish relationships with the people who are using the language (Oxford & Shearin, 1994). Integrative motivation is associated with positive attitudes towards the target language group while instrumental orientation is aiming to the functional reasons for learning a language (Gardner and Lambert, 1959; 1972).

Seeing the significance of motivation in the language learning process, a lot of studies has been conducted in exploring the motivation of the students in learning a language in different contexts. Al-Tamimi and shuhib (2009) found that the students are having better instrumental motivation in learning the English language. Alga (2016) also found that the samples of her studies are having more instrumental reasons for learning the language. Wimolmas (2013) also share the same findings that students from Thammasat University are slightly more “instrumentally” in learning English. In contradict, Wechsumangkalo and Prasertratanadecho (2002) discovered that there is no difference in both types of motivations between high proficiency and low proficiency level of students in learning English. Moreover, Nidana (2017) determined that students of Kolej Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Selangor are integratively motivated in learning this second language.

The issue of motivation is not new in the process of learning a language. Many studies were done in investigating the level of students' motivation in language learning. For instance, Gardner dan Lambert's (1959, 1972), work on the types of motivation. In addition, Dornyei (2002) introduced “L2 Motivational Self System” in 2005. The concept that had been introduced by Gardner dan Lambert (1972), was improvised by Dornyei, where he investigated the correlation between a student himself and his future. Chiswick, Lee, and Miller, (2005) and Schumann (1986), believe that the element of culture plays a vital role in inspiring the students to learn a second language.

Schumann (1978) as in Ellis (1985) highlights the importance of ‘attitudes’ as a social factor, where it is as important as other variables such as ‘size of learning group’, and ‘motivation’ and ‘culture shock’. Attitude is associated with motivation, where it supports the learner's overall orientation (Gardner, 1985). In addition, Lifrieri (2005) emphasizes the significance of attitudes, however, this is not sufficient conditions for linguistic achievement. Attitudes only work with motivation in ensuring the engagement of students in language learning.

Basically, three types of attitudes have been identified in the process of language learning: “(a) Attitudes towards the community and people who speak the language, (b) Attitudes towards learning the language

concerned; and (c) Attitude towards languages and language learning in general (Stern, 1983)". Tahaineh, et. al (2013) did a study on Jordanian Undergraduates, and findings showed that their attitudes concerning the target language (English) were highly positive. In the Yemeni context, Al-Quyadi (2000) also found that the subjects of his study show positive attitudes towards the English language and they practice this language in educational and social contexts. Although there are many techniques in gauging the efficacy of second language acquisition, studies show that there are strong correlations between students' attitudes and motivation (Mohd & Musaev, 2017). Few studies have been done regarding this issue in the Malaysian context, such as studies by Mat & Yunus (2014), Muftah & Galea (2013), and by Isa, Abidin, Malek, Sidik, and Bakar (2018). These studies were conducted with specific contexts and samples such as among FELDA students at a specific area. For the purpose of this study, samples were selected from UTHM, which is representing the southern part of Peninsular Malaysia, UMP (the east coast), USIM, and USM are from the center and north part of Peninsular Malaysia respectively. Hopefully, by this research, the students' motivation can be determined and getting more understanding of their motivation to learn the second language. Therefore, the aim of this study is to investigate the students' motivation and attitude in learning English. Specifically, the research questions of this research are:

- What is the UTHM, UMP, USIM, and USM students' motivation towards learning English?
- What is their attitude in learning English?

2. Research Methods

2.1 Participants

The participants of the study were 471 undergraduate students, selected randomly from all faculties in four public universities in Malaysia. The demographic information of the participants is explained in the "Finding" section.

2.2 Research Instrument

A survey with a 7-point Likert Scale survey was adapted from Gardner's Attitude / Motivation Test Battery (AMTB). It ranged from strongly agree to strongly disagree (Gardner, 1959). The questionnaire is divided into two parts; part one on the demographic information and part two concentrates on items associated with attitudes of students in learning English, integrative and instrumental motivation.

2.3 Data collection

A survey was distributed to the participants from January to March 2019. The researchers prepared the questionnaire using Google form and distributed it to the students using the WhatsApp platform. Instructors from these four public universities posted the file in class WhatsApp groups to be accessed by the participants.

2.4 Data analysis

The data were analyzed in terms of means, using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23 and percentages. The data were analyzed to answer the objective of the research; identifying the participants' attitudes towards learning English, their integrative, and instrumental motivation. The motivation items were calculated and categorized into three categories; high, moderate, and low. The range of categories was based on:

$$\frac{\text{The highest} - \text{the lowest}}{3}$$

This formula has been used by Assoc. Prof. Dr. Jusang Bolong (2010) in his lecture and he is an expert in statistics from Universiti Putra Malaysia.

3. Results and Discussion

This is the finding section of the study. The first part reports the demographic information of the participants. The following parts deal with the attitude, integrative and instrumental motivations of the participants.

Demographic Information

Table 1 summarises the demographic characteristics of the participants. As shown in the table, the female respondents dominant the study with 339 respondents (72%). Most of the respondents are Malay with 76.0% while Chinese, other races, and Indians are 17%, 4.7%, and 2.3% respectively.

Table 1. Demographic Information of the Respondents (n = 471)

	Frequency			
	UTHM	UMP	USIM	USM
Gender				
Male	48	19	31	34
Female	92	58	77	112
Total	140	77	108	146
Race				
Malay	103	62	107	86
Chinese	23	6	1	50
Indian	2	3	0	6
Others	12	6	0	4
Total	140	77	108	146

Research Question 1:• What is the UTHM, UMP, USIM, and USM students' motivation towards learning English?

Students' motivation is measured by eight items highlighted in Gardner's instrument. Table 2 and 3 display the integrative and instrumental motivation of the students. Table 2 displays the finding of students' instrumental motivation.

From table 2, it can be summarised that the participants have high instrumental motivation in the process of language learning as the result revealed more than 60%; UMP with 81.8%, followed by USIM with 69.5%, UTHM, and USM with 65% and 61.6% respectively. The percentage gained is based on the number of populations of each university. Those who possess moderate instrumental motivation are not more than 30% while those who are in a low category are between 2% to 9%.

Table 2: Instrumental Motivation of Students (n= 471)

	Instrumental Motivation			Total
	Low	Moderate	High	
UTHM	8 (5.7%)	41(29.3%)	91(65%)	140
USM	13 (8.9%)	43 (29.5%)	90 (61.6%)	146
USIM	4 (2.7%)	29 (26.9%)	75 (69.5%)	108
UMP	4 (5.2%)	10 (13%)	63 (81.8%)	77
Total	29	123	319	471

The table below shows the students' integrative motivation. Most of the participants have high integrative motivation where all universities have more than 80% of their respondents possess high integrative motivation. UMP with the highest percentage with 89.6%, followed by USIM (88.9%), and UTHM, and USM with 83.6% and 80.8% respectively. It can be concluded that the students have high integrative motivation where most probably they would like to be part of the culture of the target language.

Table 3: Integrative Motivation of Students (n=471)

	Integrative Motivation			Total
	Low	Moderate	High	
UTHM	3 (2.1%)	20 (14.3%)	117 (83.6%)	140
USM	4 (2.7%)	24 (16.4%)	118 (80.8%)	146
USIM	1 (0.9%)	11 (10.2%)	96 (88.9%)	108
UMP	1(1.3%)	7 (9.1%)	69 (89.6%)	77
Total	9	62	400	471

The same findings found in the study conducted by Obeidat (2005) and Nidana (2017), where they found that students are having better integrative motivation. However, this study shows contradict findings with studies done by Wimolmas (2013), Adila (2012), and Wong (2011), as they revealed that their students are having higher instrumental than integrative motivation. This is due to different settings such as Wimolmas (2013) in Thailand, and Adila (2012) in Bandung. In addition, in Wong's study (2011), the samples are mostly Chinese students as compared to this study where the majority of the samples are Malay.

Students are possessing higher integrative motivation may be due to the reason where, in Malaysia, especially those who are living in big cities, English is very commonly used in daily life. Some of them use it as the medium of communication among family and friends. English remains unfamiliar especially in rural areas in Malaysia (Azman, 2006).

The final table is a comparison table on both types of respondents' motivation.

Table 4: Comparison between Integrative and Instrumental Motivation (n=471)

Motivation	Mean	Std. Dev
integrative	6.3691	.768
instrumental	6.1008	.819

Table 4 presents a comparison between integrative and instrumental motivation. Findings show that integrative motivation is higher than instrumental motivation, where $M=6.37$, $SD=0.77$, $M=6.1$, $SD=0.82$. In a nutshell, it can be concluded that the respondents of this study are having high integrative than instrumental motivation in learning English.

Students' Attitude in Learning English

Ten items were prepared in examining the students' attitudes towards learning English. The negative items (item no 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10) have been recorded to be positive items. The findings show that the students have positive attitudes toward learning English as 6 items have a mean more than 6.0, "English is not a waste of time" ($M=6.4$, Std. Dev.= 1.09), "English is a very important part of the school program" ($M=6.35$, Std. Dev.= 0.88), "I think that learning English is dull" ($M=6.14$, Std. Dev.= 1.21), "I hate English" ($M=6.13$, Std. Dev.=

1.19), “When I leave university, I will give up the study of English because I am not interested in it” (M=6.09, Std. Dev.= 1.32), and “I plan to learn as much English as possible” (M=6.04, Std. Dev.= 0.97).

Table 5: Mean and Standard Deviation of Students’ Attitude (n=471)

		Mean	Std. Dev.
1	Q1	5.95	1.03
2	Q2	5.75	1.06
3	Q3	6.35	0.88
4	Q4	6.04	0.97
5	Q5	5.75	1.09
6	Q6	6.13	1.19
7	Q7	4.35	1.59
8	Q8	6.40	1.09
9	Q9	6.14	1.21
10	Q10	6.09	1.32

Students are found to have positive attitudes towards learning English. This study shares similar findings with studies done by Mat & Yunus (2014), Al-Tamimi & Shuib (2009), and Isa, Abidin, Malek, Sidik, and Bakar (2018) as their respondents of the study possess a positive attitude in learning the language. Students are aware of the importance of learning English as it is the lingua franca of the world and as the language for STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics) education (Nair, 2020).

Seeing the importance of English as a second language in Malaysia, students were realized that mastering English is one of the soft skills that has been highlighted by the Ministry of Higher Education (Roselina, 2009). English has been used commonly in daily conversation and mastering this language is a bonus for them especially for employability (Ting, Ernisa, Chuah, Misieng, and Jerome, 2017). English is considered a second language in Malaysia rather than a foreign language. Therefore, the students have been exposed to the language since they are at an early age.

4. Conclusions

In general, this study revealed that the integrative and instrumental motivations of students from these four universities are high. The integrative motivation of the students is found to be higher than their instrumental motivation. Students have a positive attitude towards learning English. Thus, these answered the objective of the research.

Even the students possess high motivation and a positive attitude to learning English, why the students are unable to score well in MUET examination? Are there other factors that contribute to the low achievement of MUET examination? A further study needs to be conducted to see if other factors such as language anxiety and learning strategies suit well in their learning process. With the findings, it is a hope that the instructors could be able to prepare suitable lessons in making successful teaching and learning classrooms. By identifying their motivation and attitudes, this could be a great source for the instructors to stimulate the motivating activities in class, thus lead the students to possess better language proficiency.

Acknowledgment

The authors would like to thank Universiti Tun Hussein Onn Malaysia under the Registrar Office for generous financial support.

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