

## Examining Motivation among Higher Learning Undergraduates

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**Abstract:** Motivation is the key factor to stimulate learning as it is part of a language learning process. A learner is suggested to retain good motivational level to ensure positive outcomes and successful achievement in second language learning. This study was conducted to investigate the instrumental and integrative motivation among higher learning undergraduates in Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM). An adapted version of Gardner's Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) was used as research instrument and 100 undergraduates were selected as respondents. Results indicated that UTM undergraduates have high instrumental and integrative motivation towards second language learning.

**Key words:** Motivation, integrative, instrumental, undergraduates, higher learning

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### INTRODUCTION

Motivation is believed to be one of the significant factors in inspiring and promoting second language learning and a vital element in determining the outcome. In fact, it has become as one of the central issues in language learning besides an integral part of second language. According to Winke (2005), motivation is considered one of the strong components of the language learning success story as it is the core of the learning process. It is well-known among researcher that without sufficient motivation, learners would not be interested in learning and they will not put much effort to learn a new language. However, to directly pinpoint the source of motivation is very difficult (Frith, 1997). Zarein and Jodaei (2015) mentioned that as motivation is a very complex construct, researchers in different areas have various ways to define it. One example is Loewen and Reinders (2011) who stated that motivation is one of the psychological theories that is referring to a person's desire and encouragement to participate in a particular activity. In education, motivation is unquestionably one of the most significant factors that educators can aim for in order to improve learning. Similarly, in language learning, Gardner and Lamberts specifically identified two types of motivation for learning a language which are mainly instrumental and integrative. Nearly all researchers, irrespective of disciplines view both as important mainly in fulfilling one's purpose of learning. Maintaining one's motivation is also crucial in explicitly determining a successful results in terms of academic attainment. This

study will refer closely to Gardner and Lamberts definition of these two types of motivation. Thus, according to them, instrumental motivation is when a learner wants to learn a language for practical reason such as when they gain benefit from it. Examples include graduating from college, sitting for university examination or certain requirement, attending a job interview or applying for a certain employment. In learning a second language, Gardner and MacIntyre (1991) further emphasized that instrumental motivation is a way to gain social and economic advantage. Hence, it can be said that the instrumental motivation is when learners see the target language as a tool for them to obtain a reward or to get something beneficial. Normally, instrumental motivated learners are motivated because of some external factors and these factors will bring them towards promising and positive achievement. In contrast, integrative motivation is when a learner wants to learn a target language because they want to get to know more about the people who speak the language and to blend in that particular culture. Ellis (1994) strongly believed that with integrative motivation, learners learn a language in order to achieve their wish which is to blend in with the people and culture of the target language. In terms of language learning, integrative motivation can be considered as an encouragement or key factor to successful language learning. This assumption is drawn based on learner's aspiration to integrate into the targeted society to gain extra advantage where they can develop their proficiency level in that language. Cokley *et al.* (2001) claimed that learners with integrative motivation

tend to give more attention and extra efforts in learning a language to blend well in the society. Similarly, Walkin (1972) who shares the same sentiment, added that integrative motivations would help to promote the students in improving their language proficiency. Consequently, motivation is essential in achieving one's aims in life. A student, cannot learn unless he/she is motivated to learn on a consistent basis. A student must be instilled with motivation so that he/she can learn efficiently or else the learning process will not take place. As mentioned earlier, motivation has been widely acknowledged by parents, teachers, lecturers and researches as one of the keys factors in promoting the success of second language learning. Ultimately, it cannot be denied that both instrumental and integrative motivations play an integral role in achieving this goal. Nevertheless, the question remains as to whether undergraduate students at the tertiary level are motivated to learn English. Hence, this study is interested to find out the instrumental and integrative motivation of Universiti

Teknologi Malaysia undergraduates in learning English and which of the two types of motivation has greater influence towards their second language learning.

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

**Respondents, instrument and analysis:** The respondents of the study were 100 undergraduate students in Universiti Teknologi Malaysia (UTM) during the 2015/2016 academic year. This study uses the adapted questionnaire from Gardner (1985)'s Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) (Table 1). The 21 items that represent the integrative and instrumental motivation are shown in Table 2 and 3. A 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1-strongly disagree, 2-disagree, 3-neither agree or disagree, 4-agree and 5-strongly agree is used as shown in Table 4. Descriptive statistical analysis of mean and standard deviation are used to determine the results.

Table 1: Score range and motivation levels

Scale	Scale range	Motivational level	Score range
5	Strongly agree	Highest	4.50-5.00
4	Agree	High	3.50-4.49
3	Moderate	Moderate	2.50-3.49
2	Disagree	Low	1.50-2.49
1	Strongly disagree	Lowest	1.00-1.49

Table 2: Distribution of undergraduates

Gender	Frequency (f)	Percentage
Male	46	46.0
Female	54	54.0
Total	100	100.0

Table 3: Distributions of instrumental motivation of undergraduates

Statements	Distribution on responses					Mean	SD
	SD	D (%)	NAD (%)	A (%)	SA (%)		
Learning English is a basic university requirement	-	-	3, 3.0	44, 44.0	53, 53.0	4.50	0.56
Learning English is much more fun than learning other subjects	-	2, 2.0	54, 54.0	34, 34.0	10, 10.0	3.52	0.70
Learning English is important for travelling overseas	-	-	9, 9.0	38, 38.0	53, 53.0	4.44	0.66
Learning English enables me to search for information and materials in English for my homework on the Internet	-	-	10, 10.0	47, 47.0	43, 43.0	4.33	0.65
Being proficient in English is important to pass my examination	-	-	26, 26.0	52, 52.0	22, 2.0	3.96	0.70
Being proficient in English can lead to more success and achievements in life	-	2, 2.0	21, 21.0	49, 49.0	28, 28.0	4.03	0.76
Studying English will help me to further my education	-	1, 1.0	7, 7.0	59, 59.0	33, 33.0	4.24	0.62
Studying English enables me to understand English books, movies, music	-	-	12, 12.0	34, 34.0	54, 54	4.42	0.70
Studying English enables me to appreciate English arts and literature	1, 1.0%	3, 3.0	34, 34.0	40, 40	22, 22.0	3.79	0.86
Studying English is important because it will be useful in getting a good job	-	1, 1.0	9, 9.0	39, 39.0	51, 51.0	4.40	0.70
Overall mean	-	-	-	-	-	4.16	

Table 4: Distribution of integrative motivation of undergraduates

Statements	Distribution on responses					Mean	SD
	SD	D (%)	NAD (%)	A (%)	SA (%)		
Learning English enables me to have foreign friends	-	3, 3.0	14, 14.0	59, 59.0	24, 24.0	4.04	0.710
Learning English is important for making a knowledgeable and skilful person	-	1, 1.0	14, 14.0	44, 44.0	41, 41.0	4.25	0.730

Table 4: Continue

Statements	Distribution on responses					Mean	SD
	SD	D (%)	NAD (%)	A (%)	SA (%)		
Learning English is important to make me an educated person	-	1, 1.0	12, 12.0	53, 53.0	34, 34.0	4.20	0.682
Being proficient in English is important to keep me up with the development of today's world	-	-	13, 13.0	49, 49.0	38, 38.0	4.25	0.672
Being proficient in English makes other people respect me	2, 2.0	6, 6.0	36, 36.0	41, 41.0	15, 15.0	3.61	0.886
Studying English enables me to better understand and appreciate the ways of life of native English speakers	-	3, 3.0	20, 20.0	34, 34.0	43, 43.0	4.17	0.853
Studying English is important because it will allow me to meet and converse with more and varied people	-	-	9, 9.0	49, 49.0	42, 42.0	4.33	0.637
Studying English enables me to discuss interesting topics in English with the people from other national backgrounds	-	1, 1.0	9, 9.0	52, 52.0	38, 38.0	4.27	0.664
Studying English enables me to transfer my knowledge to other people	-	1, 1.0	13, 13.0	53, 53.0	33, 33.0	4.18	0.687
Studying English enables me to participate freely in academic, social and professional activities	-	2, 2.0	11, 11.0	53, 53.0	34, 34.0	4.19	0.706
Studying English enables me to behave like native English speakers	-	6, 6.0	33, 33.0	41, 41.0	20, 20.0	3.75	0.845
Overall mean	-	-	-	-	-	4.11	-

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Instrumental motivation among undergraduates:** Based on the findings in Table 3, it is found that the instrumental motivation towards learning English among UTM undergraduates is at a high level ( $m = 4.16$ ). This result indicated that UTM undergraduates are instrumentally motivated to learn English. One justification behind this finding could be because they realize learning the language is necessary as it is part of the university requirement before they can graduate (Table 3). By referring to the UTM Academic Guideline for Undergraduate Programme (2013/2014), it is compulsory for all undergraduates in the degree program to take six credits of English language courses during their study before they can graduate from the university. Indirectly, they are instrumentally motivated to learn because they are afraid that they would not be able to graduate if they fail the subject due to this condition that they have to fulfil. This finding is consistent with Hudson (2000) who considered instrumental motivation as the need to achieve something practical especially from the study of a second language. Another possible explanation for high instrumental motivation results in this study is that undergraduates in this study are academically selected to enrol in UTM. They are chosen candidates who have passed several admission criteria listed by UTM. In recent years due to its research university status, UTM has become very selective in choosing new student's applications in order to safeguard its quality. Thus, after enrolling in this university, these undergraduates are fully aware that performing well in English is a essential as it offers benefits for a brighter future. Indirectly, one of the advantages of being proficient in the language is they will be able to perform well during job interview and eventually acquire a job, taking them a step closer to accomplishing their dreams. As such in addition to

obtaining excellent academic results, possessing high motivation will help them become more outstanding and marketable in the employment field. Some of them are motivated to learn English because they see English as a tool that will provide them with access to high-level occupations where they believe they can earn more money. As stated by Sarudin *et al.* (2013), employers in Malaysia are searching for graduates who have good communication skill who can meet the demand of the job market and are capable to compete at international level. This is also supported by Walkins (1972) who claimed that an instrumentally motivated learner is someone who learns a language not only for them to pass examinations but also because the educational system requires them to learn the language which is similar to the results of this study. As suggested by Gardner and Lambert, learners with instrumental motivation learn a language based on practical reasons and for several purposes that will benefits them such as acquiring an occupation and the ability to earn higher income. Hence, instrumental motivation is because of one's desire to achieve something practical and concrete from learning a second language (Hudson, 2000). On the other hand, the findings of this study also showed that UTM undergraduates believed that this type of motivation would enable them to understand English books, movies, music among other things (Table 3) which is similar to a study conducted by Rahman *et al.* (2017) who found that secondary students in Malaysia learn English by watch English TV programs. Hence, the result is also consistent with Muraven and Slessareva (2003) who declared that motivation is a source of energy to help and encourage people to achieve their goals. Holt (2001) who believed that language achievement is more tangible with instrumental motivation, further support this. Examples include, meeting the condition for university graduation, applying for a job, requesting higher salary based on language

ability or attaining higher social status. As emphasized by Gardner (1985), motivation is the point to which a person strives or works to learn the language because of a desire to do so and the pleasure he derives from it.

**Integrative motivation among undergraduates:** In this study it is discovered that UTM undergraduates have high integrative motivation ( $m = 4.11$ , Table 4). The results of the study showed that they want to learn English because learning English is important in making them a more knowledgeable and skilful person (Table 4). They also recognize how imperative learning the language can be as it is important to make them an educated person. The findings also highlight that studying English enables them to better understand and appreciate the ways of life of native speakers (Table 4). High integrative motivations indicate that these undergraduates agreed that English would help them to socialize and mingle with the society especially when they enter the working environment where they will meet and converse with various kinds of people. As mentioned by Gardner (1983), integrative motivation is when a person is willing to integrate into the society by using the language as their native language. The results of this study are similar to Walkins (1972) who further clarified that a learner is integratively motivated when he learns a language because he wants to mix with the native speakers of the language or to be able to live in the place where the language is used. The findings point out that the undergraduates are aware that learning the language will benefit them-not only by enabling them to keep abreast of other cultures but also to gain extra information and to have a greater awareness of current issues. Indirectly, they believed familiarity in English would help them to catch up with the latest news since most of the technologies require them to know English to help them gain the required information. This view is supported by Ansari (1993) who believed that an integrative motivated person is someone who sees the great benefits of being able to speak a second language and to understand other cultures. This is also in line with Gardner (2005) who further added that the concept of integrative possibly means that a person learns a language not because he wants to become a member of another culture but due to his/her openness to accept the characteristics of another culture. This interpretation supports the findings of this study where undergraduate students did not learn English because they want to behave like native English speakers but because learning the language will enable them to meet and converse with various people which will help them to socialize across cultures as many international students are enrolled in UTM for them to apply the knowledge and skills learnt.

This concurs with who acknowledged integrative motivation as the most powerful factor in choosing a language and in deciding on the amount of effort that they are willing to contribute when learning the language. Generally, integrative motivated undergraduates are more likely to persevere when they encounter tasks that are challenging as they know the significance of learning a second language. Hence, this strategy is consistent with what Kitjaroonchai and Kitjaroonchai (2012) advocated which is that integrative motivation will assist learners in finding other suitable approaches that will lead them to bigger accomplishment in life. To sum up, UTM undergraduates who have high integrative motivation in this study are those who are willing to learn a language to become part of a society. They also, admire the people who speak the language and who are forever eager to integrate into the community in which the language is used (Falk, 1978).

## CONCLUSION

The findings of this study revealed that the UTM undergraduates possess high motivation for both instrumental and integrative motivation. It is believed that their high motivation is related to their outstanding academic background before enrolling in UTM which influences their attitude and awareness towards the importance of second language. Based on the result of this study, besides having the aspiration and desire to learn, it is strongly believed that having the right motivation is the key factor to become a successful person.

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