

***A Survey Study of Motivation in English Language Learning of
First Year Undergraduate Students at
Sirindhorn International Institute of Technology (SIIT),
Thammasat University***

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Abstract

Motivation has long been identified as one of the main factors affecting English language learning (Gardner, 1985). This study examined the type and level of English language learning motivation (instrumental or integrative) of 30 first-year undergraduate students at an international institute of engineering and technology in Thailand. A modified motivational survey of 20 items adapted from Gardner's Attitude/ Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) was conducted. The data were analyzed by means of frequency, percentage, arithmetic mean and standard deviation. The main findings show that the students are relatively "highly" motivated and found to be slightly more "instrumentally" motivated to learn English. This reveals that instrumental motivation is a significant factor among this group of students learning English. Based on this study's findings, some relevant and useful motivational learning implications are recommended for enhancement and improvement of the students' motivation. Relevant language improvement programs and activities are also discussed in accordance with the students' language difficulties as communicated in the open-ended questions to increase their motivation in English language learning.

Keywords : motivation, instrumental motivation, integrative motivation, SIIT, undergraduate students

1. Introduction

Motivation is defined as the extent ones strive to acquire the language because of the desire to do so and the satisfaction derived from it Gardner (1985). Motivation is considered significant in its role in language learning success. Along this line of thoughts, students' motivation toward English language learning can, to a certain degree, influence their learning results. It is worth investigating how students become successful or failed in learning English because it might affect their motivation and the way they learn the language. Zoltan Dornyei (2002) stated that the learner's enthusiasm, commitment and persistence are the key determinant of success or failure.

1.1 Background

Sirindhorn International Institute of Technology, Thammasat University (SIIT) was established in 1992. It is located at the Rangsit Campus of Thammasat University. SIIT is the international institute offering bachelor's, master's and doctoral degree programs in engineering, technology and management. Being an international institute, SIIT students have more opportunities to practice English communication skills than students of many other universities since lecture courses offered are conducted in English. English Training Unit, Department of Common and Graduate Studies is responsible for English course instructions. Students have to study English for 3 hours a week or 45 hours for a course. Even though English is the medium of instruction at SIIT, but their progress in English skills, especially in English classes are still unsatisfactory. There are many negative behaviors indicating that the students lack motivation to learn English.

The study of the first year undergraduate students' responses, at SIIT, Thammasat University, is expected to provide important information in determining the extent and type of their motivation i.e. integrative or instrumental. The significance of this study should be that the responses lead to a better knowledge of their motivation. The findings could help the institute work toward an improvement of their motivations and, alongside, enhancing their language learning achievement at the very earliest stage of their enrollment in the first year.

Ellis (1997) points out that, as a teacher, we need to explore more fully the factors that are involved in motivating students to perform tasks well because this is something that a teacher has some control over. Therefore it is important to find out the underlying possible factors which affect students' motivation in English learning, especially in the practical sense to teachers who want to stimulate students' motivation.

1.2 Objectives of the study

This study will be carried out to determine the motivational level of the first year undergraduate students at SIIT, Thammasat University and to determine if they are more integratively or instrumentally motivated English language learning.

1.3 Research questions

The research study was conducted to survey the first year undergraduate students in the second semester, academic year 2012 in particular. Its objective was to find the answers to the following questions :

1. What is the level of motivation among these first year undergraduate students at SIIT, Thammasat University towards English language learning.?
2. Are they predominantly integratively or instrumentally motivated towards English language learning ?

1.4 Scope of the study

The study was conducted with the samples selected from first year undergraduate students at SIIT, Thammasat University, Rangsit Campus in the second semester, academic year 2012 to explore the dominant motivation in their English language learning. The data for this study is obtained through questionnaire administered to the total number of 30 students. Identifying whether they are integratively or instrumentally motivated, we may be able to formulate measures for the improvement of their learning motivation in English language. This is for the purpose of their better language learning success. Their type of motivation could be identified at this first point to assist them through their successful path of learning English.

2. Review of Literature

2.1 Definitions of motivation

There are many different definitions of motivation, especially in language learning.

Harmer (1991, p.3) explains the meaning of motivation as the "internal drive" that pushes somebody to do something. If we think that our goal is worth doing and attractive for us, then we try to reach that goal; this is called "the action driven by motivation".

Lightbown and Spada (1999, p. 56) note that motivation in second language learning is quite complicate to study which can be explained in terms of two factors: learner's communicative needs and their attitudes towards the second language community.

In addition, Parsons, Hinson and Brown (2001 , p. 28) define motivation as an important component or factor in the learning process. Learning and motivation have the same importance in order to achieve something. Learning makes us gain new knowledge and skills and motivation pushes us or encourage us to go through the learning process.

Gardner (1982), in his socio-educational model, notes that motivation is perceived to be composed of three elements. These are effort, desire and affect. Effort refers to the time spent studying the language and the drive of the learner. Desire indicates how much the learner wants to become proficient in the language, and affect means the learner's emotional reactions related to language study.

Aree Punmanee (1991) views motivation as the process aroused by stimulus to achieve desired purposes, behaviors or conditions. Motivation is the continuous process based on a person's desire.

2.2 *Types of motivation*

(Harmer, 1991, p. 3) uses the word 'goal' to categorize the motivation in second language learning into two types :

1. *Short-term goal* means when students wish to succeed in doing something in the near future, for example, students who want to pass their examination or to get good grade or high scores.
2. *Long-term goal* refers to a wish of students or learners who want to get a better job in the future or to be able to communicate with people who use the language that they study or the target language.

Krashen (1988, p.22) mentioned the following factors which are rather related to motivation that will attempt to relate the second language ability to these two functions.

1. *Integrative motivation*, defined as the desire to be a part of recognized or important members of the community or that society that speak the second language. It is based on interest in learning the second language because of their need to learn about, associate or socialize with the people who use it or because of purpose or intention to participate or integrate in the second language using the same language in that community; but sometimes it involves emotion or affective factors a great deal. (Saville-Troike, 2006, p. 86)
2. *Instrumental motivation* involves the concepts of purely practical value in learning the second language in order to increase learners' careers or business opportunities, giving them more prestige and power, accessing scientific and technical information, or just passing a course of their study in school. (Saville-Troike, 2006, p. 86)

Furthermore, the motivation is further classified into two main categories as the following:

1. *Extrinsic motivation* refers to a desire to get a reward and avoid punishment. It emphasizes external need to persuade the learner to take part in learning activity (Arnold, 2000, p. 14), such as homework, grade, or doing something to please teachers. Both integrative and instrumental motivations are also grouped under the branch of the extrinsic motivation (Harmer, 1991, p. 4)

As extrinsic motivation is based on external outcomes such as rewards and punishment. This motivation could bring a negative impact to the students, because with extrinsic motivation, students do not learn with their strong intention or will but they study it because they are pushed by the interest in the rewards or the punishment. When a student is learning because he is promised rewards or because he wants the rewards, he will be highly motivated to come to classes and learn and achieve the goal that is set for him. But when these rewards are taken away, or sometimes even if they do not see any punishment, the student will not be interested in coming to class and learn the language any longer.

2. *Intrinsic motivation* refers to learning itself having its own reward (Arnold, 2000, p. 14). It means the learners are willingly and voluntarily (not compulsorily) try to learn what they think it is worth or important for them. When students have intrinsic motivation, they have the internal desire to learn and they do not have the need for external outcomes. There are no negative impacts in having intrinsic motivation. In addition, intrinsic motivation pushes the student to learn without rewards, because the need is innate or come from inside or depends on their own will. Lightbown and Spada (1999, p. 56-57) mentioned that teachers do not have many effects on students' intrinsic motivation since the students are from different backgrounds and the only way to motivate students is by making the classroom a supportive environment.

2.3 *The Importance of motivation in second language learning*

Motivation has an important role in success and failure in learning a second language. Spolsky (1990, p. 157) stated that motivated students are likely to learn more and learn more quickly than students who are less motivated. In a particular learning situation, students who are less motivated are likely to lose their attention, misbehave and cause discipline problems. On the contrary, students who are more highly motivated will participate actively and pay more attention to a certain learning task or activity.

2.4 *Factors that affect motivation in second language learning*

Four factors that can be dangerous to the learners' motivation, according to Harmer (1991, p. 4) are the following :

1. *Physical condition* which means the atmosphere in class. For example if student have to study in the bad lighting classroom, overcrowded with too many students, have to look at the small board, or in the unpleasant smell classroom, they can lose their motivation or their motivation in learning will be lowered.

2. *Method of teaching* which refers to the way that students are taught must affect their motivation. Whenever the learners feel bored at the teacher's method, their motivation would likely be lost or gradually decreased. As he said, "*If the students loses confidence in the method, they will become demotivated*" (Harmer, 1991, p. 5)

3. *The teachers* as the most powerful variable of motivation and demotivation, can become a major part in demotivating the learners.

4. *Success* refers to the appropriate level of challenge designed by the teachers. If the difficulty of work and activity is too high or too low, it can lead students to a demotivated situation in learning. As Harmer pointed out, to give high challenge activities may have a negative effect on motivation. Students can also equally be demotivated by too low level of challenge.

From Krashen's affective filter hypothesis (as cited in Lightbown and Spada, 1999, p. 39), emotional states such as tiredness, depression, boredom, etc obstruct the learning process of the students. Anxiety becomes a factor that influences the affective filter. Low anxiety is more helpful for second language acquisition (Krashen, cited in J.Oller and J. Richards, 2003, p. 183). This means that learners' anxiety can affect their motivation. According to Krashen, there are three affective variables that interact with the affective filter.

1. *Motivation* which is beneficial for language acquisition
2. *Self-confidence* which is also useful for acquisition
3. *Anxiety* which is good in the case where it is in a low level

2.5 *Relevant research*

Hedge (2000) conducted a study that investigated the motivation of 20 Japanese students who were studying English. The findings indicated that the most common reasons for studying English as a second language were for communication with people overseas, finding employment in a high profile career, processing international information, and understanding other cultures. These findings were related with the work of Gardner and Lambert (1972) which suggested that a person's need for studying a second language is for the ability to socialize with the learning language community or integrative motivation and the ability to gain knowledge applied from that learning language or instrumental motivation.

Siriluck Wechsumangkalo and Sirithip Praserttrattanadecho (2004) conducted a study which indicated clearly that high English proficiency subjects are more integratively motivated than low English proficiency subjects. However, there was no significant difference in the level of instrumental motivation between two groups of subjects. Moreover, the study showed that high English proficiency subjects are more motivated than low English proficiency subjects with low English achievement.

3. **Research Methodology**

3.1 *Participants*

The participants of the study were 30 first year undergraduate students from Sirindhorn International Institute of Technology (SIIT), Thammasat University, who were studying in the second semester, academic year 2012.

3.2 *Research instrument*

The instrument used in this study is a 5 point Likert Scale which was adapted from the original 7-point Likert Scale format of Gardner's Attitude / Motivation Test Battery (AMI),

ranged from ‘Strongly Agree’ to ‘Strongly Disagree’. (Gardner, 1960). Some of the questions used in the questionnaire were adopted from Prapphal’s Attitudes Testing (Prapphal, 1981) to gather information on participants’ motivation. There are 20 questions in the questionnaire. The questionnaire consists of two main parts: integrative motivation (items 1-10) and instrumental motivation (items 11- 20). The questionnaire format consists of the following parts.

Part 1: General demographic information of students : sex and age.

Part 2: Students’ motivation related to various variables of English language earning.

Part 3: Additional open-ended questions on subjects’ relevant comments on area of problems on English skills which affect their learning motivation.

3.3 Data collection

The questionnaires were distributed to the 30 students during their normal class session during which time they were given clear instructions and explanation for filling out the questionnaire. The questionnaires were then collected upon completion.

3.4 Data analysis

The data obtained from the questionnaires were analyzed using the SPSS program. The data concerning subjects’ general background as well as their comments were calculated and presented in percentage. A five-point Likert scale was used to measure the level and type of subjects’ learning motivation. Such scale was used in the questionnaire to specify the level of the agreement or disagreement based on the following criteria:

Mean Range	Interpretation
3.68 – 5.00	High degree of Motivation
2.34 – 3.67	Moderate degree of Motivation
1.00 – 2.33	Low degree of Motivation

4. Findings

The findings of this study are divided into three parts : (1) general information of the subjects; (2) students’ motivation, and (3) results from open-ended questions.

4.1 General information

This part indicates the general demographic data of the respondents. The results are shown based on the questionnaires as follows :

Table 1 Gender of Respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percent (%)
Male	23	76.7

Female	7	23.3
Total	30	100

Table 1 shows that there were a total of 30 respondents. The majority of respondents were male (76.7 %) and the minority of the respondents were female (23.3 %).

Table 2 Age of Respondents

Age (years)	Frequency	Percent (%)
18	16	53.3
19	13	43.3
20	1	3.3
Total	30	100

Table 2 shows the age of respondents. This varied from 18-20 years old. This is the usual age range of the students at the first year level.

4.2 Motivation

This part presents overall details of the study's results. The following two tables (Table 3 and 4) outlines all the 20 questioned items, their resulting itemized mean scores , using descriptive statistics of Mean scores and Standard Deviation (S.D.) and their corresponding motivation levels, which serve as the basis for further interpretation and implications.

The following Table 3 contains 10 instrumentally motivated related items.

4.2.1 Instrumental Motivation

Table 3 Instrumental Motivation

Instrumental Motivation	Mean	S.D	Rating of Motivational Level
1. I mainly focus on using English for class assignment and the exams.	4.33	0.60	High
2. I simply quote the textbooks and do not really communicate myself when speaking or writing in class.	4.20	0.48	High
3. I am interested in reading only English textbooks for my university study, but not other English texts e.g newspapers, magazines.	4.27	0.44	High
4. I am more interested in earning a university degree and a good job than learning English language itself.	4.27	0.57	High

5. I am more interested in furthering my higher education than learning English language itself.	4.23	0.76	High
6. Learning English is important for travelling abroad.	4.35	0.58	High
7. Learning English is important for making me a knowledgeable and skillful person.	4.47	0.62	High
8. Learning English is important for making me an educated person.	4.37	0.60	High
9. Being proficient in English can lead to more success and achievements in life.	4.60	0.49	High
10. Being proficient in English makes other people respect me.	4.43	0.50	High
Total	4.35	0.56	High

Table 3 reveals that the respondents possessed a high level of instrumental motivation. This is shown clearly by the average mean score of 4.35 in the table. Statement number 9 (Being proficient in English can lead to more success and achievements in life) has the highest mean (4.60). The statement number 7 (Learning English is important for making me a knowledgeable and skillful person.) has an average mean score of 4.47. And the statement number 10 (Being proficient in English makes other people respect me.) has an average mean score of 4.43. The lowest mean score of 4.20 is statement number 2 (I simply quote the textbooks and not really communicate myself when speaking or writing in class. However, the overall mean score of instrumental motivation demonstrates a high level of motivation.

4. 2. 2 Integrative Motivation

Table 4 Integrative motivation

Integrative Motivation	Mean	S.D	Rating of Motivational Level
11. Studying English enables me to understand English books, movies, pop music etc.	4.43	0.68	High
12. Studying English enables me to better understand and appreciate the ways of life of native English speakers.	3.47	0.78	Moderate
13. Studying English enables me to keep in touch with foreign acquaintances.	3.80	0.85	High
14. Studying English enables me to discuss interesting topics in English with the people from other national backgrounds.	4.20	0.76	High

15. Studying English enables me to transfer my knowledge to other people e.g giving directions to tourists.	3.97	0.96	High
16. Studying English enables me to participate freely in academic, social, and professional activities among other cultural groups.	4.27	0.91	High
17. Studying English enables me to behave like native English speakers: e.g accent, using English expressions.	3.73	0.94	High
18. Studying English enables me to appreciate English arts and literature.	3.47	1.04	Moderate
19. Studying English helps me to be an open-minded, and sociable person like English speaking people.	3.63	1.10	Moderate
20. I am determined to study English as best as I can to achieve maximum proficiency.	4.40	0.72	High
Total	3.94	0.63	High

Table 4 shows the overall high degree of integrative motivation of the respondents with a high average mean score of 3.94. The statement number 11 (Studying English enables me to understand English books, movies, pop music etc.), the statement number 20 (I am determined to study English as best I can to achieve maximum proficiency.) and the statement number 16 (Studying English enables me to participate freely in academic, social, and professional activities among other cultural group.) show the highest level of instrumental motivation with the mean scores of 4.43, 4.40 and 4.27 respectively. However, the statement number 12 (Studying English enables me to better understand and appreciate the ways of life of native English speakers.) and the statement number 18 (Studying English enables me to appreciate English arts and literature.) both have the lowest mean score which is 3.47 and is considered as a moderate level of motivation.

Table 5 The Comparison Between Integrative and Instrumental Motivation

Motivation	Mean	S.D.	Meaning
Instrumental Motivation	4.35	0.56	High
Integrative Motivation	3.94	0.63	High
Total	4.16	0.59	High

Table 5 presents the comparison between instrumental and integrative motivation. It reveals that the mean score of instrumental motivation (4.35) is higher than the mean score of integrative motivation (3.94). However, the overall mean scores of both types of motivation of 4.16 is considered as a high degree of motivation.

4.3 The result from open-ended question

This section highlights the major language difficulties encountered by the respondents which can affect their motivation in learning English. The result is demonstrated in the table below.

Table 6 Encountered Difficult Language Skills

Area of Language Difficulties	Frequency	Percent (%)
Writing Problem	14	47
Speaking Problem	9	30
Reading Problem	4	13
Listening Problem	3	10
Total	30	100

From the table 6, four language skills of difficulties faced by first year SIIT students suggested in the additional open-ended questions are given in percentage.

Writing problems (47%) is rated by the students as the most difficult problem faced. Students most likely encounter this problem because they have to complete their class assignments, quizzes, midterm and final papers in writing in all subjects. Therefore, this skill is required for training and practice.

Speaking problems (30%) is classified as the second most difficult skill faced. This may be because part of SIIT course requirements include student individual and group class presentations on several topics. As the students may still lack confidence in this area, necessary oral presentation skills cannot be excluded in further training.

Reading comprehension problem (13%) is stated as the third most difficult skill. This may point to the fact that textbooks, reading materials, quizzes, midterm and final exam papers are all in English language at SIIT. This skill should be further enhanced through training or practice.

Listening comprehension problems (10%) is rated the least difficult skill. This shows that through class studies and lectures in English, students seem to be familiar with listening in English. However, as pointed out by the students, this skill is not without its problems. Thus, it still needs enhanced training and practice.

These areas of language skills encountering difficulties can serve as guidelines for SIIT to organize more practical language programs addressing these particular needs to increase the motivations in learning English of the students.

5. Discussion and Recommendation

The overall results reveal that the students are highly motivated to learn English. This finding answer the research question of what the level of the subjects' motivation is. Based on the comparison and assessment, it is discovered that the students are slightly more strongly instrumentally motivated to learn English which can answer the research question of the motivation found is more integrative or instrumental. The students' related difficulties in the language skills, as communicated in the open-ended questions deserve further attention. All these findings have relevant implications and should therefore lead to recommendations for further training or studies.

The students' inclination toward instrumental motivation could be of great value for the Institute for the enhancement through new focuses on the Institute's English language enhancement programs. At the same time the institute should also take into account the potentials and strategies for the students' integrative motivations to learn English and ultimately improve their proficiency. It might be beneficial for the institute to implement the on-going extra curricular language programs or activities involving both faculty members and students to encourage interaction and enhance the exposure and the language usage.

Based on the findings of this study, the results are unique for this particular students: i.e their high motivation in both instrumental and integrative aspects and even with a slight dominance in instrumental motivation. Moreover, the study of students in other institutions with largely different context may yield significantly different results. Future research should also include more and various of institutions or universities, both international and Thai.

The research obtained the data from 30 students within a strict time limit. It is recommended a larger sample size with a longer time frame should be extended to increase the degree of generalization of the study and in order to make the findings more valid and reliable.

This study does not examine motivation in English language learning of students of other year level such as year 2 -4. It is recommended that more variety of respondents should be studied including different year of study.

As the English learning motivation is one of the most important learning factors, the need to determine the actual motivational situations of any students group is worthwhile. This is for the benefit of their language-learning effectiveness and proficiency.

In conclusion, this study was conducted to provide some insights into the level and type of motivation of the first year students at Sirindhorn International Institute of Technology (SIIT), Thammasat University. The study provides useful knowledge and information for the institute to improve their English courses. Although the data source of the study may not represent all other student group, the researcher is still confident that the results will give a relative representation and be of a great value to authorities or researchers concerned.

Motivation in English language learning of the students can be a great source of knowledge and understanding to implement relevant programs or activities to stimulate the more motivating learning atmosphere. Students with adequate motivation will become efficient language learners with ultimate language proficiency.

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