Role of Integrative and Instrumental motivation in the L2 learning of local Malaysian ESL university students

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Abstract

This paper explores the role of integrative and instrumental motivation in the L2 learning of local Malaysian ESL university students, and attempts to discover which type of motivation plays a more significant role. The research tested both Foundation and Degree level students from Malaysian universities, both public and private. This research was conducted using Gardner and Lambert’s(1959) model for integrative and instrumental motivation, which was adapted from Ahmadi(2011), in which 16 questions were chosen for testing. The questionnaire was handed out both physically and via Facebook Messenger chat and results indicated that Foundation level students were more instrumentally motivated while Degree level students were more integratively motivated but overall, both integrative and instrumental motivation plays an equally significant role in the L2 learning of local Malaysian ESL university students.

Keywords: Motivation; Integrative; Instrumental; ESL; Local Malaysian

1.0 Introduction

Motivation can be defined in a myriad of ways as it is too complex of a notion and cannot be given a single, narrow definition. However, generally motivation is defined as a psychological factor which arouses an organism to act towards a desired goal and optimize well-being (Defining Motivation, n.d.) In terms of psychology, Kleinginna and Kleinginna(1981) define motivation as an internal state or condition also described as a need, desire or want that served to energize behavior and give it direction and Franken(2006) expands this definition using additional components which are the arousal, direction and persistence of behavior (as cited in Huitt,2011). In terms of second language learning, Crookes and Schmidt(1991) define motivation as the learner's orientation with regard to the goal of learning a second language (as cited in Norris-Holt, 2001).

Studies surrounding the role of motivation in L2 learning has been the focus among researchers for the last three decades and remains a fertile area with more room for research (Spolsky,2000 as cited in Keblawi,n.d.). However, the most prominent figure and pioneer of this area of research is Robert Gardner whose invention of the Socio-Educational Model has
overwhelming influence on the pool of research conducted in respect to the role of motivation in L2 learning. Gardner’s model consists of four phases which seeks to interrelate four features of second language acquisition which include the social and cultural milieu, individual learner differences, the setting or context where learning happens and linguistic outcomes. In relation, motivation in this model is perceived to be made up of three elements: effort, desire and effect. (Gardner, 1982 as cited in Norris-Holt, 2001)

Gardner and Lambert (1972) further divide motivation into two types which are integrative and instrumental motivation, whereby the former is defined as learning the language out of interest in or desire to identify with the culture of the target language, while the latter is defined as learning the language in order to achieve practical goals. As such, Gardner places more emphasis on integrative motivation as the stronger driving force and an essential component of long-term success for learners in a formal setting to pursue a second language (Ahmadi, 2011). In contrast, Mao (2011) found instrumental motivation to be of higher influence as compared to integrative motivation among senior high school students in China. Brown (2000), however found that there is no clear distinction between integrative and instrumental motivation and that they are not mutually exclusive but rather a combination of both. He cited the example of international students living in America, learning English both for academic reasons as well as to integrate and assimilate with the natives and their culture (Ahmadi, 2011).

Therefore, this paper attempts to discover whether or not integrative and/or instrumental motivation affects Malaysian university ESL students and if it does, which type of motivation plays a greater role.

2.0 Literature review

According to Skehan (1989), motivation generally appears to be the second best predictor of success following just aptitude and Gardner (1985) states that motivation involves four aspects which include goal, effortful behavior, a desire to achieve the goal and positive attitude towards the activity in question (Gass & Selinker, 2008). Spolsky (1989) states that learners will spend more time learning an aspect of a second language as their motivation increases while Lewin (1952) believes that learning itself is motivation and will lead to success. In contrast,
Bruner (1966) believes that excessive motivation may cause learners to lose their natural curiosity, especially when they are pushed or forced to learn (as cited in Mao, 2011).

Gardner’s Socio-Educational model has been the foundation of studies revolving around the role of motivation in L2 learning and this model focuses specifically on SLA in a formal classroom setting rather than a natural environment. Gardner has four phases to this model; the social and cultural milieu, individual differences, the setting or context in which learning occurs and the linguistic outcomes. The social and cultural milieu refer to the individual’s environment which influences their beliefs about language and culture. I.e. an individual living in a monocultural country does not see the need to learn another language and believes that minority groups should learn the dominant language in order to fit in, as compared to an individual living in a bilingual country whose attitude towards biculturalism determines their positive attitude towards learning a second language. The second phase discusses four individual learner differences which are believed to be the most influential in SLA which are intelligence, language aptitude, motivation and situational anxiety (Giles & Coupland, 1991 as cited in Norris-Holt, 2001) The third phase which is an extension of the second, refers to the relationship between the setting; formal and informal with the four variables mentioned. For example, intelligence and aptitude play a stronger role in a formal classroom setting as compared to an informal natural environment while motivation and anxiety show no difference in either setting. The last phase focuses on the linguistic outcomes (language knowledge, skills and proficiency) as well as non-linguistic outcomes (learner’s attitude and belief towards the target language culture) and Ellis (1997) asserts that learners who strive to achieve both outcomes will reach higher L2 proficiency and more favorable attitudes (Norris-Holt, 2001).

Gardner’s model focused on two types of motivation; integrative and instrumental. Gardner (n.d) described integrative orientation as “a collection of reasons that reflect common or conceptually similar goals, that indicate that the individual is learning the language because of a genuine interest in coming, or at least willingness to come, closer psychologically with individuals who speak the language” and instrumental orientation is “a goal that doesn’t seem to involve any identification or feeling of closeness with the other language group, but instead focus on a more practical purpose learning the language would serve for the individual” (Gardner, n.d. P.10)
Over the years, researchers have built on Gardner’s model and further expanded the definition of motivation, more specifically intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Deci(1975) defines intrinsic motivation as “one for which there is no apparent reward except the activity itself” (as cited in Mao,2011. P 1732) Intrinsic motivation is where learners engage in an activity for their own sake and not to reap any particular rewards, but rather for feelings of joy, pleasure, satisfaction or self-competence. In opposition, extrinsic motivation is defined as “… behaviors carried out in anticipation of a reward from outside and beyond the self.” (Mao,2011. P.1733) For instance, to receive praises, good grades or monetary gains. In relation to that, Carreira(2005) proposed a framework of Intrinsic/Extrinsic and Integrative/Instrumental motivation in SLA on the basis of the existing models of Brown(2000) and Hayamizu(1996) in which 8 types of motivations are categorized which Carreira believes aids learners in SLA and provides a more profound conceptual understanding of extrinsic/intrinsic and integrative/instrumental motivation.

Although Gardner has made significant breakthroughs in this field of SLA, his model has been challenged by other researchers mainly because of its over-emphasis on integrative motivation and the fact that Gardner’s primary test subjects were EFL learners as opposed to ESL learners, as well as other factors. Dörnyei(2005) highlights the lack of development in Gardner’s model by stating that the model is not in line with the changes that have taken place in researches surrounding motivation following the ‘cognitive revolution’ in psychology and hence, believes that Gardner’s model is no longer relevant (as cited in Taie & Afshari,2015). Moreover, Taie and Afshari(2015) claim that Gardner’s over emphasis on integrativeness places high importance on the positive attitude and behavior of learners towards the target language culture but fails to explain how learners can achieve success in learning an L2 despite not having a positive attitude and behavior towards the target language culture. Furthermore, Gu(2009) criticizes Gardner for attributing L2 learning only on social attitudes of learners and neglecting political status of languages. He cites the changing power relationships between Anglophone and Francophone communities in Canada as an example (as cited in Taie and Afshari,2015) Similarly, Keblawi(2006) explains that the line between instrumental and integrative motivation is not clear. I.e. wanting to learn English to know more about English culture can be either instrumental or integrative depending on the learner’s intentions and understanding. Furthermore, Keblawi noted that a striking problem with the socio-educational model is that there is not much educational elements in it and he attributes this to the fact that Gardner himself
was not a language teacher but a statistician and psychologist and most of Gardner’s research was done in college settings where the effects of teachers on learners is not obvious. Thus, the model related more to sociology rather than education and hence is not too suitable in L2 learning. Besides, Keblawi also states that Gardner has excluded several other potential motivations such as the self-determination theory, goal theories and attribution theory (A review of language learning motivation theories, n.d.).

Although many studies have been conducted over the decades, researchers have not been able to reach a consensus on which type of motivation (instrumental/integrative) plays a more important role in L2 learning or if they are both not mutually exclusive, and if there are other factors which contribute to motivation. Study conducted by Ghenghesh (2010) on EFL learners from a Tripoli high school found that leaners’ motivation decreases with age with students attributing their decreasing levels of motivation to teachers’ teaching styles and influences while Shibuya (2010) discovered that Japanese ESL learners require both internal (personal interest and effort) and external influences (teachers/parents/peers) as well as a balanced mix of both instrumental and integrative motivation to enable them to achieve success on L2 learning in a Japanese university socio-educational environment. Besides, instrumental motivation proved to be more dominant than integrative motivation amongst female ESL learners in Bombay (Lukmani, 1972 as cited in Norris-Holt, 2001).

Similarly, Mao (2011) in her study on Chinese senior high school EFL students found that students had stronger instrumental reasons for learning English and this finding is supported by Kruidenier and Clement (1986) who claim that instrumental motivation is generally more dominant in EFL contexts as compared to integrative motivation (as cited in Mao, 2011). Furthermore, Ahmadi (2011) found that among Iranian EFL learners, female students had stronger integrative motivation while male students had stronger instrumental motivation, stating reasons that female students tend to seek social validation and are more socially dependent while male students are more career orientated and learn English mainly for vocational reasons. Last but not least, a study conducted among Masters students in University Malaya found that those who had a positive attitude towards English were motivated integratively while those who were forced to learn or did not have a good attitude towards the language were motivated instrumentally (Xiang, 2012).
3.0 Methodology

3.1 Participants

The questionnaires were handed out to 30 local Malaysian university students; 15 Foundation level and 15 Degree level students from no specific gender, race, university, department or course, ranging from 18 to 25 years of age. The requirements of the participants were that they were of Malaysian nationality, pursuing their Foundation or Degree in any university (public/private) in Kuala Lumpur and are learners of English as a second language.

3.2 Instruments

The questionnaire used was an based on Gardner and Lambert’s model adapted from Ahmadi (2011). This questionnaire was chosen due to its reliability which has been tested and proven in a study conducted on a similar topic by Ahmadi. However, question no.7 was changed as the original one was slightly unclear and the order of the questions were rearranged in a way that questions 1 to 8 shows instrumental motivation while questions 9 to 16 shows integrative motivation. The questionnaire consisted of 16 questions in a Likert scale ranging from ‘Strongly agree’ to ‘Strongly disagree’.

3.3 Procedure

The questionnaires were first piloted with 2 university students from the Law and IT faculties respectively to determine the questionnaire’s feasibility, and both of them were able to complete the survey without assistance. Subsequently, the questionnaires were distributed physically and via Facebook Messenger group chat to Malaysian university students. Physically, the students were briefed on the topic and purpose of the questionnaire and given 15 minutes to complete it while on Facebook Messenger, a closed group consisting of 15 people was created and a copy of the survey was attached with instructions and a due date to return the questionnaire.

4.0 Findings and Discussion
The results indicated that Foundation level students had higher instrumental motivations while Degree level students had higher integrative motivation. The following table shows the difference of motivation between Foundation and Degree level students. (N=30)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Foundation level</th>
<th>Degree level</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Integrative</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>motivation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instrumental</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>motivation</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results proved that Degree level students had higher integrative motivations while Foundation level students had higher instrumental motivation. This difference could be because of both the environment and teaching and learning methods that these students are exposed to. Degree level students are typically of higher maturity and have more exposure to fellow peers who are foreigners and/or native speakers of English who do not share the same L1 as most Malaysian students which is Bahasa Malaysia, Tamil or Chinese (Mandarin/Hokkien/Cantonese etc). Therefore, Degree level students are motivated by the need to fit in or socialize with native speakers and to share or immerse in their culture, in order to create and maintain friendships and relationships. In contrast, Foundation level students who have just made the transition from secondary school into university tend to be more instrumentally motivated because of the lack of exposure and the immersion in a new environment where they come into contact with native English speakers and more non Malaysian students as opposed to in school where most, if not all of them were only exposed to fellow Malaysian students who speak similar ‘type of English’. Hence, they need some time to adjust to the change in environment in university and subsequently their motivations.

Another reason could be that the teaching and learning process in school and university is significantly different; in school, English is taught as a subject on its own and the primary goal for both teachers and students is to obtain desirable grades, students’ aspirations are most likely exam oriented (instrumental) and they tend to bring the same mindset into university. However, Degree level students are not fully exam oriented whereby their assignments and presentations require them to use English in a wider scope where they need to communicate and mingle with
native speakers as well as use English to bridge the gap between students with different first languages (integrative).

The bar graph below shows the overall difference in integrative and instrumental motivation among both Foundation and Degree level students, in terms of percentage.

The graph above indicates that integrative motivation plays a greater role than instrumental motivation in the L2 learning of local Malaysian ESL university students. However, the percentage of difference between both types of motivation is only 6.6% which is minute and not highly significant. Therefore, it can be concluded that both integrative and instrumental motivations are equally significant in the L2 learning of local Malaysian ESL university students.

4.1 Reflection

I was personally motivated to learn my L2 which is English in order to fit in with native speakers and to be able to learn and appreciate their culture. I started learning English as a child even before starting formal education and it was mostly through watching English television programs and reading English books. I was intrigued by the British and American culture from a school going age (upper primary), mostly influenced by TV programs and I was eager to learn English so I can sound ‘cool’ and ‘like a white person’. As I grew older, my interest in English literature grew stronger and I began indulging in poetry and plays which only fueled my curiosity about the English ways of life. In fact, my motivations were never really to obtain good grades or for job opportunities. However, as I grew older I began to realize the importance of learning English and being proficient in the language for instrumental reasons (education, career, to raise my social status, for globalization etc) but this change did not affect my love for the language in any significant way, rather it facilitated my language learning process. Being a Malaysian, I naturally learned a second L2 which is Bahasa Malaysia (BM) from Year 1. I never learned BM informally before starting primary school and for the most part, my motivations were instrumental from that age itself because I never truly had much interest in the language, never had many native speaker friends or peers, even in school and I was proficient enough to get by in my community with a mediocre level of BM. Hence, my primary goal was only to do well in my exams.
As compared to the results of this study, both integrative and instrumental motivations played an equally important role for the learning of my first L2 (English), as the results suggest. However, in learning my second L2 (BM), instrumental motivation played the major role.

4.2 Limitation

This study has several constraints due to the limited range of research;

(a) Only 30 participants were tested which is not a significant number.

(b) All the participants were only from universities in Kuala Lumpur, hence the results do not speak for all Malaysian university students.

(c) Only 16 questions were chosen to be included in the questionnaire, while Gardner and Lambert’s original model consists of 104 questions (Gardner, 2004).

5.0 Conclusion

This research concludes that both integrative and instrumental motivation equally contributes to the L2 learning of local Malaysian ESL university students. Teachers of ESL should promote both motivations in the classroom and guide students towards achieving both integrative and instrumental goals. Besides, the two motivations cannot be treated separately but rather they are both in a continuum and teachers should make use of both types of motivations to encourage their students in their learning process, as motivation, though not completely sufficient, is a necessary component in every student’s L2 learning and can make a difference in their rate of success. Finally, I suggest that further research be done on the area of motivation among primary, secondary and tertiary level students in the Asian context, specifically Malaysian context.
References


Appendix
Motivations for Learning English

Age: 18-21 ( )
22-25 ( )
26 and above ( )

Race: ___________

Gender: ___________

I would like to find out what motivates you to learn English. Please look at the statements below and indicate how much you agree or disagree with them. Circle the number that corresponds to your own opinions.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I want to learn English, because:</th>
<th>Strongly Agree</th>
<th>Agree</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Disagree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I want to travel overseas in the future.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I want to further my studies in the future.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. English can enhance my chances of emigrating to other countries in the future.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. English is the way to gain more knowledge.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. English can raise my social status.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I want to pass my public exams.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. English can help me to find a better job in the future.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. It is part of my schoolwork.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. English can help me to make friends with people of different nationalities and background.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. To fit in with native English speakers.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. English can help me understand Western culture.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. It can help me to broaden my horizons.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. English can enable me to appreciate western films and music.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. It can satisfy my interests and curiosity.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. English is the mark of an educated person</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. I like conversing with foreigners.</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adapted from (Ahmadi, 2011)