

## **Attitude and Motivation of University Students in Learning English**

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DOI: <https://doi.org/10.30880/dils.2021.01.01.006>

Received 15 August 2021; Accepted 30 September 2021; Available online 30 October 2021

**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 of an instrument, adapted from Gardner's Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB), an online questionnaire was distributed to get the data. Students' motivational level was found to be high with ( $M=6.37$ ,  $SD=0.77$ ,  $M=6.10$ ,  $SD=0.82$ ). Additionally, the respondents were having positive attitudes in learning English ( $M=4.07$ ,  $SD=0.48$ ). With the findings, it is hoped that this can be a guidance for instructors to design a suitable lesson and approach to be used in the language classrooms.

**Keywords:** Gardner's Attitude Motivation Test Battery, Integrative Motivation, Instrumental Motivation.

### **1. Introduction**

Motivation is being accepted as one of the main factors which influences the percentage and achievement of second language acquisition (McDonough, 1983; Ellis, 1994). Nevertheless, motivation is a challenging concept as described by Gardner (2006) that motivation is a very complex phenomenon with many facets which cannot be explained easily.

Motivation leads people to keep on working, accomplishing tasks and realising goals in their life. Motivation is understood as a concept that is associated with inter-forces such as instincts, traits, volition, and will (Schunk et al., 2008). Furthermore, motivation is more associated with the learner's

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choices. Constructivists' explanation about motivation focuses on social contexts along with the individual's decisions (Brown, 2000). Motivation involves goals, activities or tasks, planning, making decisions, and solving problems (Schunk et al., 2008).

Motivation is a part of the learning process. Motivation influences what, when and how a student learns. A motivated student will engage himself with the class activities and be involved in the process of learning by following any instructions given, completing tasks and learning discussion (Zimmerman, 2000 in Schunk et al., 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 reasons such as to get promotion in their profession. In contrast, 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 aims towards obtaining functional reasons for learning a language (Gardner and Lambert, 1972).

Seeing the significance of motivation in the language learning process, a lot of studies have been conducted in exploring the motivation of the students in learning a language in different contexts. Atef & Munir (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 in learning the language. Wimolmas (2013) also shares the same findings that students from Thammasat University are slightly more instrumental in learning English. In contrast, Siriluck Wechsumangkalo and Sirithip Prasertanadecho (2002) discover that there is no difference on both types of motivations between high proficiency and low proficiency level of students in learning English. Moreover, Nidana Yahya (2017) determined that students of Kolej Universiti Islam Antarabangsa Selangor have integrative motivation in learning the second language.

### 1.1 Attitude to learn English

Schumman (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) emphasises 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 Yemeni context, Al-Quyadi (2000) also found that the subjects of his study show positive attitudes towards the English language and they practise 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' attitude and motivation (Jamila Mohd & Talaibek Musaev, 2017).

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 graduation requirements, the students need to achieve at least Band three in the Malaysian University English Test (MUET). Unfortunately, the number of students who achieve a minimum 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 obtain better grades or pass with at least band 3. However, the results remain unsatisfactory. Candidates perform many unfavourable behaviours which demonstrate that they are lacking motivation to learn English (Norhamizah et.al., 2012) and do not do well in their MUET (Juliana & Abu Bakar Nordin, 2013).

The issue of motivation is not a new issue 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 (1972), work on the types of motivation, which are known as integrative motivation and instrumental motivation. In addition, Dornyei introduced the "L2 Motivational Self System" in 2005. The concepts that had been introduced by Gardner dan Lambert (1972), were improvised by Dornyei, where he investigated the correlation between a student himself and his future. Chiswick. et.al. (2005) and Schumann (1986), believe that the element of culture plays a vital role in inspiring the students to learn a second language. Few studies have been done regarding this issue in Malaysian context, such as studies by Siti Sukinah & Melur (2014), Muneera Muftah & Shameem Rafik-Galea (2013), and by Nursyaheedah Muhammad Isa et. al. (2018). These studies were conducted with specific context and samples. For the purpose of this study, samples were selected from UTHM, which represented the southern part of Peninsular Malaysia, UMP (the east coast), USIM and USM are from the centre and north of Peninsular Malaysia respectively. Hopefully by this research, the students' motivation can be determined for more understanding of their motivation to learn the second language. The main objective of the study was to investigate the students' motivation and attitude in learning English. The research questions of this study were: (i) What was UTHM, UMP, USIM and USM students' motivation towards learning English? And (ii) How was their attitude in learning English in the classrooms?

## 2. Materials and Methods

The participants of the study were 471 undergraduate students, selected randomly from all faculties of four public universities in Malaysia. 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, 1960). The questionnaire was divided into two parts; part one on the demographic information and part two on the items associated with attitudes of students in learning English, integrative and instrumental motivation. 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 WhatsApp platform. Instructors from these four public universities posted the file in class WhatsApp groups to be accessed by the participants. The data were analysed in terms of means, using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23 and percentages. The data was analysed to answer the objectives of the research which was to identify the participants' attitude towards learning English, and 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 the following formula.

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

## 3. Results and Discussion

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

**Table 1: Demographic Information of the Respondents' (n = 471) Frequency**

	UTHM	UMP	USIM	USM
	<u>Gender</u>			
Male	48	19	31	34
Female	92	58	77	112
<b>Total</b>	<b>140</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>108</b>	<b>146</b>
	<u>Race</u>			
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

Students' motivation was measured by eight items highlighted in Gardner's instrument. Table 2 and 3 displays the integrative and instrumental motivation of the students. Table 2 displays the finding of students' instrumental motivation. From the table, 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 was based on the population of each university. Those who possessed moderate instrumental motivation were less than 30% while those who were in the low category were between 2% to 9%.

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

	<u>Instrumental Motivation</u>			<u>Total</u>
	<u>Low</u>	<u>Moderate</u>	<u>High</u>	
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 has the highest percentage with 89.6%, followed by USIM (88.9%), and UTHM and USM with 83.6% and 80.8% respectively.

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

	<u>Low</u>	<u>Moderate</u>	<u>High</u>	<u>Total</u>
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

Table 4 shows a comparison of both types of respondents' motivation.

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

<u>Motivation</u>	<u>Mean</u>	<u>Std. Dev</u>
integrative	6.3691	.768
instrumental	6.1008	.819

Table 4 presents the comparison between integrative and instrumental motivation. The findings showed that the integrative motivation was higher than the instrumental motivation, where  $M=6.37$ ,  $SD=0.77$ ,  $M=6.1$ ,  $SD=0.82$ . In a nutshell, it could be concluded that the respondents of this study had higher integrative than instrumental motivation in learning English.

The second objective of this study was to examine students' attitude towards learning English. Ten items were prepared in answering this objective. The negative items (item no 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10) were recorded to be positive items. The findings showed that the students had positive attitudes towards learning English as 6 items were with a mean score of 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

#### 4 Conclusion & Recommendations

In general, this study revealed that the integrative and instrumental motivations of students from these four universities were high. Integrative motivation of the students was found to be higher than their instrumental motivation. Students had a positive attitude towards learning English. Thus, these answered the objectives of the research. The same findings were found in the study conducted by Obeidat (2005) and Nidana Yahya (2017), as well as the study by Ahmed (2012), where they found that students were having better integrative motivation. However, this study showed contradicting findings with studies done by Wimolmas (2013), Adila (2012), and Wong (2011), as they revealed that their students were having higher instrumental than integrative motivation.

Finally, it was found that the students had positive attitudes towards learning English. This study shared similar findings with studies done by Siti Sukinah Che Mat & Melur Md. Yunus (2014), Atef Al-Tamimi & Munir Shuib (2009), and Nursyaheedah Muhammad Isa, et.al. (2018) as their respondents of the study possessed positive attitude in learning the language.

Finally, it is hoped that the instructors are able to prepare suitable lessons in making a successful teaching and learning classroom. By identifying their motivation and attitudes, this could be a great source for the instructors to stimulate motivating activities in class which could help the students to possess better language proficiency.

#### Acknowledgment

Throughout our research writing, we would like to acknowledge the Centre for Language Studies of the University of Tun Hussein Onn, Malaysia.

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