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Motivation in Second Language Acquisition among Learners in Malaysia

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Abstract

Lack of motivation is the critical factor which affects university students' learning process in Malaysia. Hence, this study is an attempt to investigate the types of motivation which Bachelor students used in learning English at one of the private universities in Malaysia. It was also analysed to determine the motivational level of the Bachelor students who learn English as a Second Language (ESL). This study used a quantitative method where the data was collected through the questionnaire adapted from Gardner's (1972) Attitude, Motivation Test Battery (AMTB). The questionnaire was distributed to 150 students and the data was analysed quantitatively. The findings showed that the majority of the Bachelor students were instrumentally motivated towards learning ESL. The result concerning the level of motivation showed that the students had a high level of instrumental motivation for learning English, compared to integrative, resultative, and intrinsic ones. Yet, it is also apparent that all four types of motivation are at a high motivational level. Based on the findings, a few suggestions were highlighted. First, the lecturers should always design a classroom environment that promotes students' motivation towards learning ESL. Second, students should be given more opportunities to visit other English native countries under Global Learning Programmes (GLP). In that case, teachers or lecturers of ESL should promote all types of motivation in the classroom and guide students towards achieving goals.

Keywords: Motivation, integrative motivation, instrumental motivation, resultative motivation, intrinsic motivation.

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1. INTRODUCTION

ESL (English as a Second Language) is the use or study of English by speakers of other native languages. Education in Malaysia uses English as a second language. While the students make an effort to adapt to this language, they face difficulties as the importance of the English language needs to be fully highlighted among Malaysian schools and universities. To identify the factors behind this issue, [Adwani and Shrivastava \(2019\)](#) analysed the factors affecting SLA (Second Language Acquisition). They focused on five main factors including motivation. They strongly believed that motivation is the neglected heart of language teaching. They said, “it is observed that all of the learning activities are filtered through the students’ motivation. Without student’s motivation, there is no pulse; there is no life in the class” ([Adwani & Shrivastava, 2019, p. 159](#)). In conjunction with that, this study is focused on the motivation factor as the factor which affects the students’ learning process.

Motivation refers to the combination of the effort plus the hunger to achieve the goal of language learning with good attitudes towards language learning ([Achmad & Yusuf, 2016; Ulfa & Bania, 2019; Usman et al, 2016](#)). That is to say, motivation to learn a second language indicates the degree to which a person works to learn the language because of the urge to do so, and the satisfaction they feel in a task ([Rubrecht & Ishikawa, 2012](#)). Motivation is not reflected by effort alone. The motivated person is spending effort toward the goal, but the person expending effort is not usually motivated ([Gardner et al., 1983](#)). Along this line of thought, student’s motivation can influence their learning result in learning the English language. It is worth researching how students succeed in learning English or have failed because it may affect their motivation and the way they learn the language. [Dornyei \(2002\)](#) said the enthusiasm, dedication, and perseverance of the learner are the essential factors in determining the success or failure. Thus, only a few researchers have done this type of study which focuses on four types of motivation.

The idea of this study was gained from [Narayanan et al. \(2008\)](#) who conducted a study on some factors affecting English learning at the tertiary level. They focused on three factors, and one of them was motivation. Besides, they focused on four types of motivation as well but on a different aspect. They intended to find out the impact of motivation on male and female students separately. They wanted to compare the motivation between genders. Unfortunately, except for the impacts of motivation on genders, we did not find out how these impacts do affect the students’ learning. To further their research, this study focuses on the types of motivation and the level of motivation among Malaysian BTEFL students (Bachelor of TESL or Teaching English as a Second Language) regardless of gender. By identifying the level, we can find out the effects of motivation on students’ learning.

Nowadays, there are many methods and ways for students to learn English. Yet, TESL students in Malaysia find it very difficult to adapt to the language. In Malaysia, English is taught as a second language. Bahasa Melayu, the national language, is used as the medium of instruction in schools. English learning is considered not very successful in the country due to “the lack of students’ motivation, poor attitude of students to learn English and a shortage of teachers adequately competent in the language” ([Dardjowidjojo, 1996, as cited in Kam, 2003, p. 9](#)). In that case, student’s motivations in learning English need to be focused on as they can bring out positive

and negative outcomes. Multiple researchers have conducted studies investigating the major barriers, but this issue still exists among second language learners.

The result of the research is expected to be valuable data for instructors, particularly English lecturers, in assessing and empowering TESL students. The investigation of the language-learning barrier in the second language acquisition of Malaysian TESL students will hypothetically show relevant information for teachers, directors, and language course planners. This study will assist them in making the right decisions concerning instructing English to college students. Along these lines, they can change specific guidelines to improve students' motivation in acquiring English. It is trusted that by perusing the after-effect of this study English lecturers can choose what sort of guidance they should use in endeavouring to give students more self-sufficiency or authority over their learning. Similar studies have been done multiple times regarding motivational factors, but conducting this on TESL students who are future English teachers may give a significant result.

The purpose of this study is to find out the major barriers in learning English as a second language (ESL) focusing on the factors of motivation among BTESL students in Malaysia. Specifically, the aims of this study are:

- a) To investigate the type of motivation that Malaysian BTESL students use in learning English as a second language.
- b) To determine the level of motivation among Malaysian BTESL students who learn English as a second language.

The research questions are:

- a) Which type of motivation do the Malaysian BTESL students use in learning English as a second language?
- b) What is the level of motivation among Malaysian BTESL students who learn English as a second language?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In this 21st century learning, there are many ways for students to use or to utilize for learning English as a second language. Yet, students are facing problems in the process of acquiring the English language. Language learning barriers appear in and out of students while they are learning the language, and the main barriers would be lack of motivation. In many cases, students are more focused on the grammar that they get nervous and never bother to learn English. Many students tend to give up before trying because they are afraid of being laughed at by outsiders. Gardner et al. (1983, p. 39) express that motivation is “the level to which the individual works or endeavours to gain proficiency with the language as a result of a longing to do as such and the fulfilment experienced in the movement”. According to Gardner (1985), to comprehend why language students were persuaded, it is imperative to comprehend the objective or the motivation behind the students for learning the language. He alluded to this as learners' orientation. His theory of second language learning inspiration is distinguished into two unmistakable components, i.e. integrative orientation and instrumental orientation.

To be more specific, in integrative factors, students get a language for superior comprehension and to convey and get to know with individuals who communicate in the language. Motivation to take in a subsequent language comes from positive

emotions toward the community that communicates in that language (Gardner et al., 1983). On the other hand, Deci and Ryan (1985) characterized this kind of motivation as intrinsic motivation wherein students discover delight and enthusiasm for learning a language with an uplifting frame of mind. Similarly, Clement et al. (1994) found that students with high integrative motivation will generally work harder, are more intelligent, and adapt more quickly than the individuals who have low integrative inspiration.

The instrumental factor is acquiring a language because of some specific reasons. Students do always have their own reason to acquire a language., for instance, getting a good job or getting into the right college or passing examinations. Gardner et al. (1983, p. 2003) define instrumental motivation as “learning a language because of some more or less perceived utility it might have for the learner”. Learners are instrumentally motivated mainly for the attainment of a desired external reward.

Besides integrative and instrumental motivation, Brown (1994) introduced intrinsic motivation in his book, *Principles of Language Learning and Teaching*. Intrinsic motivation is the eagerness and interest to do and take part in certain activities because an individual feels that they are attractive and pleasant. Students who have intrinsic motivation are inclined to stay with intricate and complicated problems and gain knowledge from their slips and mistakes (Walker et al., 2006). Deci (1975) defined intrinsically motivated activities are those for which, except the activity itself, there is no apparent reward. People appear to be engaging in the activities for their own sake and not because they lead to extrinsic rewards. Intrinsically motivated behaviours are intended to bring about some internally rewarding consequences, namely, feelings of competency and self-determination.

On the other hand, resultative motivation concerns the relationship between motivation and achievement, which is defined as interactive by Ellis (1994). The motivation of learners is highly influenced by their achievement. Students doing well in classrooms are more likely to build confidence and to be more eager to join in. The conceptual framework for the current study (see Figure 1) is considered based on the previous researcher’s notions accordingly.

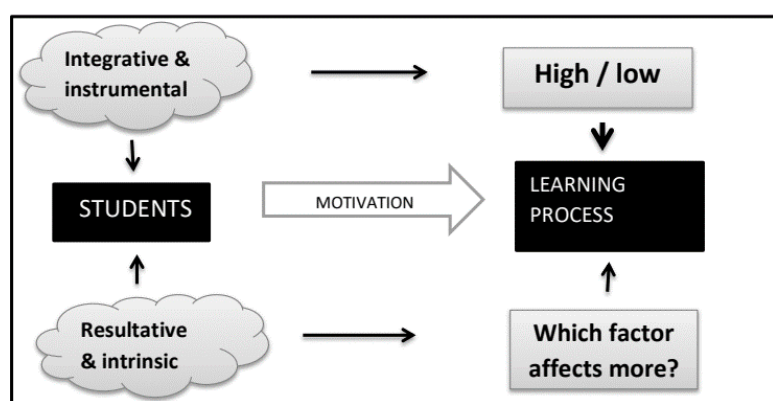


Figure 1. The conceptual framework.

Different researchers have studied the challenges faced by learners while learning English among different age groups of learners. According to Seefa (2017), the English language enjoys a position which no other language does because it is more than communication; it is a language of power, prestige, and upward social mobility.

However, many teachers and researchers believed that teaching and learning English is not an easy procedure as we thought. [Seefa \(2017\)](#) researched learners' perspectives of the challenges faced in learning English as a second language in Sri Lanka. Her samples were from secondary schools, including 45 boys, 55 girls, and 10 English teachers. The data was analysed based on both quantitative and qualitative methods. According to the data collected by the researcher, lack of English exposure outside the classroom, lack of facilities, and poor economy lead to external challenges. At the same time, anxiety, motivation, and attitudes fall under internal challenges. Moreover, unqualified teachers and the use of wrong teaching strategies contribute to the problems as well. The researcher concludes and recommends that the teachers create awareness among students about the importance of learning English.

A study was done at Al-Jazeera University, Dubai, UAE by [Al-Ta'ani \(2018\)](#); it discussed integrative and instrumental motivations for learning English as a university requirement. The sample for this study was 50 undergraduate students studying English Communication Skills in the second year. The participants were from different majors to receive various views on their learning motivation. The researcher used questionnaires as a tool to collect data. The questionnaire was adapted from [Gardner's \(1985\)](#) Attitude, Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) with the integrative and instrumental scales, and the questionnaire consisted of 3 sections. The researcher found that the students have a high level of motivation in both integrative and instrumental ones for learning English. Still, their instrumental motivation is a little more than their integrative one. Based on the result of the study, the researcher recommends examining students' motivation in English language learning of speaking majors. He also suggests designing a classroom environment that promotes students' motivation towards learning English and student centre.

[Alqahtani \(2018\)](#) explored English language learning motivation and English language learning anxiety in Saudi military cadets, a structural equation modelling approach. The participants were 174 Saudi Military Academy elementary level cadets. These cadets were learning English as one of the civilian subjects that cadets must study throughout their three years at the academy. This study used a quantitative method, and the questionnaire was developed by the author with five points of Likert scale. The result showed that the cadets' positive attitudes towards the learning environment motivated them to invest more effort and persistence in learning English. However, their negative attitudes towards the learning environment affected their L2, which increased their English learning anxiety. The researcher then recommended that the parents encourage their child (L2 learners) on their language-learning attitude. In that case, the students might get motivated to invest more effort in learning English.

[Achmad and Yusuf \(2016\)](#) explored the motivational factors for learning English in Aceh, Indonesia. A total of 56 year-one and year-three students participated in the study. A questionnaire was used to collect data on three motivational factors, i.e. intrinsic, extrinsic, and integrative. Although the results for these three factors were similar, integrative motivation was found to be the most important reason for learning English. The researchers then suggest that the teachers consider activities that involve students to interact with people who use English as an international language.

[Samejon \(2015\)](#) piloted a study on tertiary level students in the Philippines. His purpose was to investigate extrinsic motivation factors in learning English as a second language. The study used a descriptive-survey design. The questionnaire, with 48 items, was given out to the students, which corresponds to [Vandergrift's \(2005\)](#), [Noels](#)

et al.'s (2000) and Lucas's (2010) studies. The researcher found that the students predominantly have personally valued learning the macro skills of the language. The students also believe that learning the skill is instrumental for reasons such as getting high grades. In the end, the researchers aim to extend this study to other students at different levels of education.

3. METHODS

This study used a quantitative method to find accurate data. This study used quantitative data because it employed an interpretation of statistics and mathematical counts. A number of 150 second-year BTESL students were selected from a private university in Selangor, Malaysia, following purposive sampling. We focused on total population sampling. This is where we examined the entire population to generate reviews of experiences on the motivation factors.

A questionnaire was used, taken from Gardner and Lambert (1972) Attitude, Motivation Test Battery (AMTB), and modified to fit with our research objectives. The reliability test was taken, Cronbach Alpha coefficient of 0.926. The link of the questionnaire was shared via WhatsApp, and all the collected data from the online questionnaire was then analysed using the SPSS version 23. Accordingly, the quantitative data obtained using the questionnaire was analysed into percentages, and tables and figures were drawn to present it.

4. FINDINGS

This research concludes that the BTESL students are instrumentally motivated towards learning English as a second language. Although instrumental motivation scores the highest among all four types of motivation, it was just slightly higher than integrative motivation. The result concerning the level of motivation showed that the students had a high level of instrumental motivation for learning English, compared to integrative, resultative, and intrinsic ones. Yet, it is also apparent that all four types of motivation are at a high motivational level.

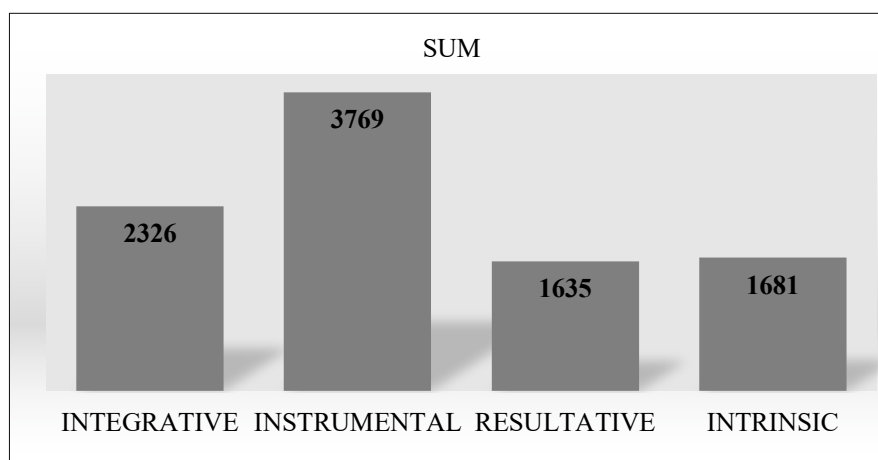


Figure 2. Total scores.

Based on Figure 2, it has been proved that the BTEFL students are mainly instrumentally motivated towards learning English as a second language. Hence, BTEFL students are acquiring the English language for their specific reasons. Most of them get the following motivation: to pass the exam, to get a better job in the future, and knowing English is important for their success and achievements.

To identify the BTEFL students' motivation level, an average score for all respondents was calculated by means of SPSS. Then, an overall mean score for the respective four types of motivation was estimated to identify the range among them. Figure 3 are the calculated mean scores for all four types of motivation.

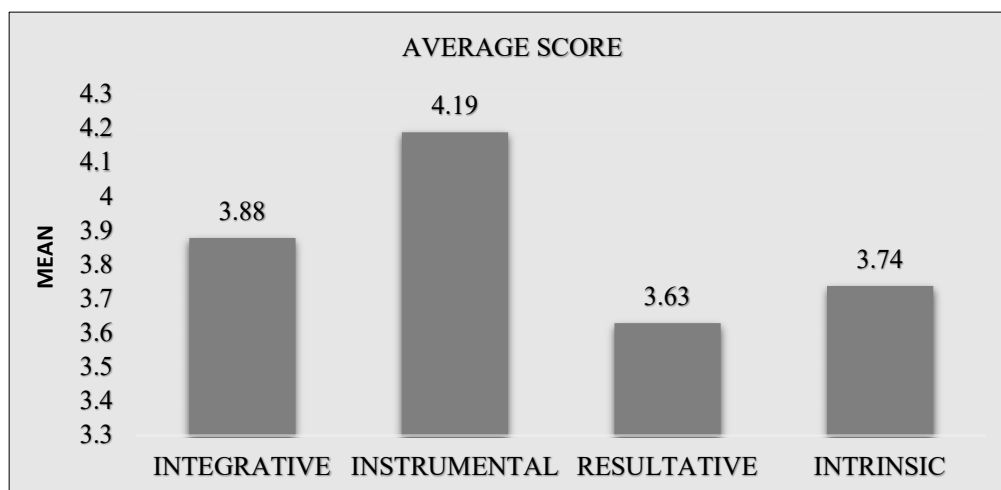


Figure 3. Average mean scores.

Based on Figure 3, the results showed that instrumental motivation has relatively higher mean scores (Mean = 4.19) compared to the other three types of motivation. It is also apparent that all four types of motivation are at the high motivational level, and the respondents' instrumental motivational level slightly surpassed their integrative one by 0.31. To conclude, the overall mean scores also reveal that the BTEFL students have high instrumental motivation towards learning English as a second language.

5. DISCUSSION

The results of this study harmonize with the findings of research by [Al-Ta'ani \(2018\)](#), [Kitjaroonchai and Kitjaroonchai \(2012\)](#), [Rehman et al. \(2014\)](#). All these researchers found that the students have a high level of instrumental motivation towards learning English as a second language compared to other types of motivation. All these studies also show another similar pattern of results where integrative motivation was just slightly lower than instrumental motivation. The difference between our study and their study would be [Al-Ta'ani \(2018\)](#) and [Rehman et al. \(2014\)](#), which focused on only two types of motivation, i.e. integrative motivation and instrumental motivation. Whereas, this study has covered two other types of motivation: intrinsic and resultative. On the other hand, [Kitjaroonchai and Kitjaroonchai \(2012\)](#) identified the correlation between the students' learning motivation and their academic achievement. Meanwhile, this study has identified the

mean value together with the level of each type of motivation towards learning English as a second language.

5.1 The Type of Motivation Malaysian BTESL Students Used in Learning English as a Second Language

This investigation was carried out to find out which of the four types of motivation: integrative, instrumental, resultative, and intrinsic, could be the essential wellspring of the BTESL student's motivation towards learning ESL. The outcome shows that the students have their more noteworthy accentuation on instrumental motivation for learning English as a second language including utilitarian reasons (e.g. English is necessary to get a job) and academic reasons (e.g. English will help me to pass my exams and graduate from the college). This holds up the possibility that the students' glance through English as a significant role in their day-by-day lives, either now or later on. This outcome ties well with the past examinations by [Al-Ta'ani \(2018\)](#) that instrumental motivation was higher among university students contrasted with integrative one.

5.3 Student's Motivation Level in Learning English as a Second Language

It was found that the level of instrumental motivation was higher than the level of integrative, resultative, and intrinsic motivations among the BTESL students. However, the student's integrative, resultative, and intrinsic motivations were not low. They were unexpectedly high as well among the BTESL students. The findings are directly in line with previous finding from [Al-Ta'ani \(2018\)](#). It is also notable that all the other types of motivation, namely integrative, resultative, and intrinsic fell under the high motivational level category together with instrumental motivation. Instrumental scores are 4.19, integrative scores are 3.88, resultative scores are 3.63, and intrinsic scores are 3.74. It is stated that 3.50 to 4.49 is under a high motivation level; hence all the four types of motivation seem to be high among BTESL students in learning English as a second language.

6. CONCLUSION

To conclude, motivation in adopting a language is very complex. Besides, motivation is also a dominant factor in acquiring a new language ([Gardner et al., 1983](#)). This is why this topic has been an important research topic in the world of ESL. In this 21st century, more people will want to acquire different languages to prepare themselves for their work or in their life. In that case, this study prompted researchers to investigate further the motivation in L2 or foreign language learning and its association with other factors.

Besides, this research concludes that the BTESL students are instrumentally motivated towards learning ESL. Although instrumental motivation scores the highest among all four types of motivation, it was just slightly higher by 0.31 than integrative motivation. In that case, teachers or lecturers of ESL should promote all types of motivation in the classroom and guide students towards achieving goals. For instance, integrative motivation enhances students to learn a language and communicate with

the community, instrumental motivation enhances students to learn a language for utilitarian and academic reasons, resultative motivation enhances students to achieve more and more, and intrinsic motivation enhances students to get the best results from participating in activities. Therefore, it is crucial to promote all types of motivation for L2 learners.

Based on the result of this study and the discussion, there are some possible suggestions or recommendations for teachers, lecturers, syllabus designers, and future researchers. First, teachers or lecturers should always design a classroom environment that promotes students' motivation for learning ESL. Teachers and lecturers must also design a variety of teaching techniques and find creative ideas to make English lessons enjoyable. Motivation is not something static; instead, it is dynamic and can be changed from one type to another. A variety of teaching techniques and a creative lesson will motivate and encourage students towards the positive side of learning English. Next, students should be given more opportunities to visit other countries in a program called "Global Learning Programmes" (GLP). Joining these types of programmes can easily encourage students to learn the English language. Furthermore, visiting other countries for learning purposes can also encourage students to share their knowledge with others and to communicate with other English language learners from different parts of the country. Finally, yet importantly, for future researchers, this research recommends conducting a new study on the impact of parental encouragement on second language learner's motivation towards a target language. As this study mainly focuses on students, teachers, and lecturers, it is essential to identify parents' involvement in encouraging the L2 learners.

This study focuses on the types of motivation and the level of motivation among university bachelor students. Future researchers may focus on finding out the Pearson correlation for their factors which are more about the effects of motivation. Future researchers can also focus on students from various courses and disciplines around the country.

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