

NGHIÊN CỨU VỀ ĐỘNG CƠ HỌC TIẾNG ANH CỦA HỌC SINH TRUNG HỌC PHỔ THÔNG Ở QUẢNG NAM

AN INVESTIGATION INTO ENGLISH LEARNING MOTIVATION OF UPPER
SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN QUANG NAM PROVINCE

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TÓM TẮT

Bài báo này bước đầu tìm hiểu mục đích, động cơ và một số yếu tố ảnh hưởng đến động cơ học tiếng Anh của học sinh THPT ở Quảng Nam (QN). Chúng tôi sử dụng bảng điều tra theo mô hình của Gardner gồm 8 đề mục tìm hiểu mục đích học tiếng Anh của học sinh THPT và liệt kê 15 đề mục có khả năng ảnh hưởng đến động cơ học tiếng Anh. Đối tượng điều tra gồm 100 học sinh ở 4 trường THPT ở QN. Kết quả cho thấy đa số học sinh ở QN có thái độ và động cơ tích cực đối với việc học tiếng Anh. Tuy nhiên, đa số các em có động cơ công cụ hơn là động cơ hội nhập. Hơn nữa, kết quả cũng chỉ ra rằng động cơ học tiếng Anh của học sinh ở QN bị ảnh hưởng bởi các yếu tố liên quan đến môn học hơn là những yếu tố liên quan đến giáo viên. Từ kết quả nghiên cứu, chúng tôi đề xuất một số giải pháp và kiến nghị góp phần nâng cao chất lượng dạy và học tiếng Anh.

ABSTRACT

This study investigates English learning goals and motivation and some factors influencing the motivation of upper secondary students in Quang Nam. A modified 8-item survey adapted from Gardner's AMTB and a 15 -possible demotivating factor survey are administered to 100 upper secondary EFL students in four upper secondary schools in QN. The study reveals that the students have positive attitudes toward learning English and are highly motivated to study it, and that they are more instrumentally than integratively motivated. Moreover, the students' motivation is more demotivated by some subject-related factors rather than by teacher-related ones. Based on these findings, some recommendations to promote students' motivation in learning EFL and some pedagogical implications are provided.

1. Introduction

Motivation, believed as one of the most important factors determining the rate and success of second language (L2) attainment, provides the primary impetus to initiate learning the L2 and later the driving force to sustain the long and often tedious learning process [3]. Without sufficient motivation, students cannot accomplish long-term goals and we can not ensure their achievement, either. As [6] reiterate, "*You can lead a horse to water, but you cannot make him drink*". Research shows that motivation is crucial for L2 learning [2]; [8] because motivation directly influences (1) how much effort students make, (2) how often students use L2 learning strategies, (3) how much students interact with native speakers, (4) how much input they receive in the language

being learned, (5) how well they do on curriculum related achievement tests, (6) how high their general proficiency level becomes, and (7) how long they preserve and maintain L2 skills after language study is over [4] & [8]. However, in our local schools, students are not highly or properly motivated. This leads to the fact that students seem to lose their interests and confidence in learning English. In this case, the writers investigate students' motivation for foreign language learning, with the hope to answer the following questions:

- (1). What are the upper-secondary school students' goals for learning English?
- (2). What kinds of motivation do the students have in learning EFL in QN?
- (3). What are the factors influencing the motivation of EFL learners in QN?
- (4). What should be done to promote students' motivation in learning EFL in QN?

2. Research Methodology

The study employs quantitative and qualitative research methods.

2.1. Participants

100 students (male and female) from 4 upper secondary schools in QN, 10 English teachers and 4 administrators from these schools are asked and interviewed. Students' age range is from 16 to 18. They have studied English for 5 years.

2.2. Data Collection

For the purpose of obtaining data that will explore why the upper-secondary school students in QN learn English and what negatively affects their English learning motivation, the researchers use the following tools for data collection:

- A questionnaire of two parts. The first is adapted from Gardner's AMTB [5] to measure the students' integrative / instrumental motivation in learning English. This contains 8 items reflecting the integrative / instrumental motivation and a five point Likert Scale ranged from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree". The second is tailored to explore the factors facing the English learners. The researchers generate 15 possible factors depending on the results of relevant studies and experience teaching English enables them to identify what affects English learning in Viet Nam's context in general and in QN's in particular.
- Interviews with 20 students, 10 teachers, 4 administrators to obtain qualitative data.

2.3. Data Analysis

The analysis mainly focuses on studying students' integrative and instrumental motivations in learning English as well as the factors influencing them. The data from questionnaires and interviews are analyzed in terms of statistical frequency basing on percentages by means of tables and diagrams.

3. Findings and Discussion

3.1. Findings

3.1.1. Integrativeness and Instrumentality

The respondents were asked to indicate on a five point scale to show how important each reason was for English learning. The focus was on two types of motivational orientation: *Integrative and Instrumental* [5]. Eight statements were designed to find out the dominant reason among the upper secondary school students in QN.

Table 3.1: Integrative motivation (Frequency Distribution and Mean Score)

	Q1		Q2		Q3		Q4	
Score	Frequencies	%	Frequencies	%	Frequencies	%	Frequencies	%
1	0	0	2	2	2	2	3	3
2	1	1	6	6	24	24	11	11
3	5	5	40	40	41	41	44	44
4	55	55	38	38	27	27	20	20
5	39	39	14	14	5	5	12	12
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Mean	4.32		3.56		3.06		2.97	
Overall Mean Score: 3.48								

Q1: I study English to be more at ease with English speakers.

Q2: I study English to meet and converse with varied people.

Q3: I study English to understand British and American arts and literature.

Q4: I study English to participate more freely in the activities of other cultural groups.

Table 3.2: Instrumental motivation (Frequency Distribution and Mean Score)

	Q5		Q6		Q7		Q8	
Score	Frequencies	%	Frequencies	%	Frequencies	%	Frequencies	%
1	0	0	1	1	0	0	9	9
2	0	0	3	3	0	0	18	18
3	4	4	23	23	4	4	37	37
4	17	17	42	42	26	26	29	29
5	79	79	31	31	70	70	7	7
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Mean	4.75		3.99		4.66		3.07	
Overall Mean Score: 4.1								

Q5: I study English as I need it for my future career.

Q6: I study English to become more knowledgeable.

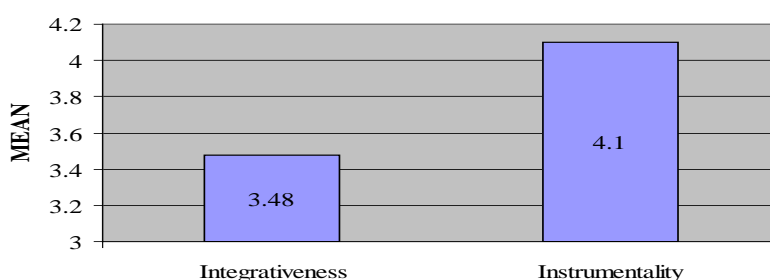
Q7: I study English as it helps me get a good job.

Q8: I study English as the others respect me more.

A close examination of the frequency distribution and mean scores of responses to the four items comprising the integrative orientations indicates that the students have high degree of integrative motivation. The mean scores of the items are over 3 except item 4. With an overall mean score of 3.48, the students show a positive attitude toward the L2 community and an agreement that studying English can allow them to interact with other English speakers, to meet more variety of English speaking people, to understand British and American arts and literature. However, over 50% of the respondents express disagreement and uncertainty in viewing learning English as a means to participate more freely in the activities of other cultural groups.

Table 3.1 and 3.2 show the respondents' clear inclination towards instrumental orientation. Whereas, only 14% of the informants accept they learn English *'to meet and converse with varied people'*, 5% agree with the statement that *'they learn English to understand American and British arts and literature'*. 12% agree that they learn English *'to participate more freely in the activities of other cultural groups'*. A higher percentage: 79%, 70% agree with the respective statements they learn English because, *'English is needed to the future career, to get a good and high ranking job'*. Additionally, the frequency distribution and mean scores of the 4 items making up the instrumental orientation show the students highly accepted items 5, 6 and 7 (*getting a good job, improving future career and being a knowledgeable person*) as being fundamental reasons to their desire to learn English. Comparing the overall mean score (3.48) of the four integrative items to (4.1) of the instrumental items as shown in figure 3.1, it can be concluded that the respondents are to a certain extent integratively motivated but they still have a higher degree of instrumental motivation.

Figure 3.1: The overall means of students' integrativeness and instrumentality



3.1.2. The demotivating factors

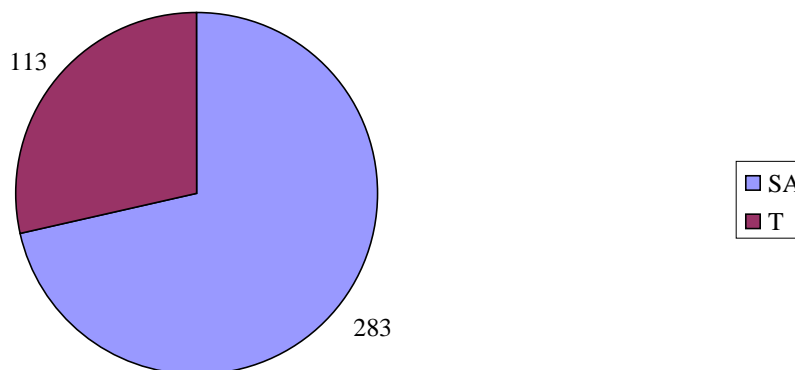
The second part of the questionnaire was designed to investigate the factors demotivating students when learning English. The question asked to recognize the demotivating factors was *"which one of the following factors demotivated you when studying English"*.

Table 3.3: The frequency distribution and percentages of the demotivating factors facing students when learning English. (n = 100).

Rank	Item no.	Demotivating factors	Frequency	Percentage
1	10	Spelling errors	90	90%
2	9	Listening skill difficulties	89	89%
3	7	Vocabulary load	70	70%
4	8	Difficulty of structure	34	34%
5	4	Rare use of technology	33	33%
6	1	Teachers' rapid speech	31	31%
7	2	Rare use of Vietnamese	25	25%
8	3	Teachers' personality	24	24%
9	6	Textbooks	20	20%
10	5	Evaluation system	17	17%
11	12	Parents' discouragement	2	2%
12	13	Friends' discouragement	2	2%
13	11	Effect of English on Vietnamese	0	0%
14	14	Social and religious reasons	0	0%

As seen in table 3.3, the most demotivating factors mentioned by the students referred to the difficulty of English as a school subject. The first places in terms of demotivating factors were occupied by some subject aspects: 'spelling errors' which was considered the first demotivating factor by 90% of the respondents, 'listening skill difficulties', 89%, 'vocabulary load', 70% and 'difficulty of the structure', 34%. Moreover, some aspects of the teacher's personality and style are still considered demotivating by considerable percentage of respondents. Demotivating factors related to textbooks was mentioned by 20% of the respondents whereas 17% feel demotivated because of evaluation system reason.

Comparing the total frequencies of the subject demotivating factors (283) to the teacher demotivating factor (113) as seen in figure 4.2 indicates that the students' demotivation toward learning English is affected largely by the subject-related aspects. Additionally, the results also show that the teachers of English in the upper secondary schools in QN are not the most dominant demotivating factor for learning English.

Figure 3.2: Total frequencies of subject aspects and teacher as demotivators

Furthermore, the participants' responses to the open ended question number 15 in the second part of the questionnaire in addition to the interviews clarified some points and added others to the results. Most of the interviewees complained about the subject demotivating factors such as the big amount of vocabulary to be memorized with their meanings, the complexity of some structural rules like different types of reported speech, the use of phrasal verbs and the use of prepositions, articles...

3.2. Discussion

The results show that the students in QN have a higher degree of instrumental orientations and motivation than the integrative ones. It can be noticed that this finding is in line with the results of many related studies conducted in the Vietnamese context [10]; [9]; [11]; [7] with slight difference concerning the rate of integrative motivation. Those studies show low rates of integrativeness among the Vietnamese students, while this study proves that the students in QN have a rather high level of integrative motivation toward learning English (mean = 3.48). This is not surprising; because of Viet Nam government's "open - door" policy, students have more chance to integrate with the other communities and nationalities.

In regard to the demotivating factors affecting learning English, the findings reveal the teacher is not the dominant demotivating factor. In contrast, the subject aspects are found to be in the first place in terms of demotivating factors. Moreover, the study reveals the effect of textbooks, friends' and parents' discouragement on the students' motivation.

Although the results indicate the students in QN are instrumentally motivated toward learning English, the respondents show a considerable amount of integrativeness. As mentioned, having integrative motivation means being ready to

integrate into the target language community and culture. It is also theorized that integrative motivation typically underlies successful acquisition of a wide range of registers and a native like pronunciation .

However, being integrative in context like in Viet Nam generally and in QN particularly might be relatively different: *Students expressed their desire to interact with other speakers of English (94%), whereas 52% like to learn English to meet and converse with varied people.*

In regard to in QN's context, the students' considerable inclination to integrativeness could be a result of the noticeable existence of the English speaking people. The unique situation of QN - a destination of two world heritages - enables the students to contact and make good relations with English speakers in universities, for example and with tourists.

Concerning the demotivating factors, the authors will concentrate on the external demotivating factors affecting the students' motivation.

However, results of the survey and interviews show that demotivators related to learning context are not the only type of demotivation. Another type of demotivation related to some subject aspects is also referred to by a higher percentage. Additionally, most of the demotivating factors in context in QN are in line with the demotivating factors categorized by [8] and [3] particularly, teacher's personality and teaching methods, the negative attitudes toward L2 community, course book and reduced self confidence. The discussion will be first about the subject demotivating factors since they are the most frequent and the teachers as demotivators affect largely the language and acquisition.

4. Implications and Recommendations

From the findings, some implications are suggested:

- Teachers, educators and syllabus designers should be sensitive to learners' motives by recognizing their instrumentality. Enhancing learners' instrumentality can be easily achieved by focusing more on practical skills such as how to communicate with others fluently and express oneself correctly.
- English textbooks and examination system should be also modified to meet the learners' instrumental motives.
- Raising students' integrativeness is necessary because both integrative and instrumental orientations are required for real language acquisition and learning.
- Interests toward the English culture and literature can be raised by exposing learners to more literary forms and by providing opportunities for communication with native speakers. The lack of contact with L2 community affect developing positive attitudes towards that community [1]. Therefore, major strategies for stimulating integrative motivation should be followed by teachers.

- The educational policy makers should make changes by reducing the load of vocabulary which should be memorized for the sake of tests and providing more attractive and motivating listening texts.
- One of the most important pedagogical implications derived from the findings is the teacher's role in shaping the learner's motivation and attitudes. Moreover, the teacher's role should be accordingly adjusted. In addition to lecturers or instructors, the teacher should also be a combination of several other roles. Teachers should create some school activities which meet the students' needs and learning goals instead of concentrating solely on memorizing vocabulary and grammatical rules at the expense of the language skills and actual language acquisition.
- Teachers should bear in minds that students have to be taught in a meaningful way to master the language skills, be able to communicate fluently and use English in real world situations.
- The integration of culture and language could function as a positive attitude and further motivation to study a foreign language [5]. At the same time, teachers should develop students' cross cultural awareness systematically rather than simply adopting the socio-cultural components to satisfy students' integrative orientations [2].
- To respond to the students' needs about tests, the teachers can reduce the students' demotivation by allocating few periods before the final exams to review and train students on test taking strategies.
- In order to utilize technology effectively in teaching English, schools should be equipped with adequate numbers of technological devices.

5. Conclusion

Motivation plays an important role in the process of English learning – teaching. The results of the research shows that to students in QN, maintaining and developing both instrumental and integrative motivation is of great significance. At the same time, the results also points out the factors that cause demotivation and affect movivation. This helps us find out the appropriate ways to increase students' motivation and design some effective strategic plans in English teaching and learning.

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