

Why Do We Learn English? Investigating the First-Year Students' Motives to Learn English in Aceh

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Why Do We Learn English? Investigating the First-Year Students' Motives to Learn English in Aceh

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Abstract

Integrative and instrumental motivation both play crucial roles in language learning, so teachers must determine which students' motivations are predominant in a classroom. The motivation of first-year students to learn English was examined in this study. It involved 77 first-year students from the Department of English Education at Universitas Syiah Kuala in Banda Aceh, 56 of whom were females and 21 of whom were males. The research tool utilized thereafter the data was a questionnaire. The Attitude/Motivation Test Battery served as its model. The acquired data were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Science version 23. The results demonstrated that instrumental motivation's mean score (M=44.18) is higher than integrative motivation's (M=43.38). However, there was little difference (at 0.92 percent). Therefore, it can be said that both integrative and instrumental motivations drove these students. Both of these motivations are closely related and function as learning objectives with a lot of value. This means that students' integrative and instrumental motivations were essential and employed. By achieving more skill and success in the target language, both integrative and instrumental motivations benefit as a result of the student's learning.

Keywords: English major, first-year students, motivation, integrative, instrumental

INTRODUCTION

Several elements, including attitude, aptitude, and motivation, are considered to have an impact on how well someone learns a language. However, students' motivation is a crucial factor in learning a language since they have to be able to use it in real-life situations (Nayan et al., 2014). Samad et al. (2012) mentioned that no matter the curriculum or the teacher if motivation is not present for or inside the students, even gifted ones cannot reach long-term goals.

Motivation is derived from the word "motive," meaning "a reason for doing something" (Hornby, 2000). This idea means that a motive or reason is significantly needed by someone before doing something, as this will influence the success of the task that will be carried out. Gardner (1985) described motivation as a combination of effort, a desire to accomplish the aim of language learning, and positive attitudes about it. It is important for language learning, and teachers must understand students' motivations in language learning (Zanghar, 2012) because it is one of the most influential factors in successful second or foreign language acquisition (Bradford, 2007).

Integrative motivation and instrumental motivation are the two categories that makeup motivation (Dörnyei, 2009; Noels, 2001). Integrative motivation is the learners' desire to be viewed as or associated with the native speakers or because the learner intends to integrate into the second language speakers' speech community (Saville-Troike, 2006; Yashima, 2002). While, instrumental motivation is the learners' desire to learn a second language because of some practical reasons (Chalak & Kassaian, 2027), such as expanding career or economic options, elevating status and power, getting access to scientific and technological information, or even just completing a subject in school. All these types of motivation can be measured by the Attitude/Motivation Test Battery, or AMTB (Gardner, 1985). There are 130 items total on the AMTB, and they are grouped into five categories:

integrativeness, attitudes toward the learning situation, motivation, instrumental orientation, and language anxiety (Gardner & MacIntyre, 1993). The AMTB has been widely used by many researchers to measure students' motivation for learning (Achmad & Yusuf, 2016; Thuan, 2021).

Several studies have been conducted to study students' language learning motivation in the classroom. A study by Choubsaz and Choubsaz (2014) motivational orientation and EFL learning among Iranian undergraduate students found that Iranian university students are both instrumentally and integratively motivated to learn English. Then, Al-Khasawneh and Al-Omari (2015) conducted a study on motivation toward learning English for Jordanian gifted students. In contrast to integrative motivation, they discovered that these students were motivated to acquire a language for practical purposes (i.e., instrumental motivation). The students' inclination to maintain their individuality may be one explanation for these outcomes. The significance of studying English to obtain better employment opportunities may be another explanation for this outcome. Meanwhile, a study by Achmad and Yusuf (2016) concentrated on exploring the motivation factors of tertiary students studying at the Secretarial Training Program at Universitas Syiah Kuala in Indonesia. Based on the findings, integrative motivation (M = 5.369) was the most common reason given for wanting to learn English, followed by intrinsic motivation (M = 4.991) and extrinsic/instrumental motivation (M = 4.732). This indicated that they learned English to interact with English native speakers from other countries who speak English.

Other researchers who have also conducted a study related to the motivation in second language learning in Canada were Clément et al., (2003). They asserted that self-confidence, which is defined as one's capacity to produce results, accomplish goals, or carry out tasks competently, is the most crucial factor from the perspective of motivation. Self-confidence is also said to influence one's motivation to learn and use the language of another speech community (Dörnyei, 2005). This is also known as the social context model, which focuses on the relationships between interethnic contact, L2 confidence, L2 competence, and L2 identity rather than second language usage (Clément et al., 2003).

Debates among professionals regarding which sort of motivation is preferable when learning a second language continue today because studies have found inconsistent results concerning the effectiveness of these two sorts of motivation in language learning (Samad et al., 2012). The learner's affective responses toward the target linguistic-cultural group determine whether or not they will succeed in learning the language, and this illuminates the importance of integrative motivation in language learning (Achmad & Yusuf, 2016). Other studies, however, suggest that instrumental motivation may be just as strongly connected with language acquisition success as integrative motivation (Liu, 2007). Even though some research shows that one type is preferable to another, both integrative and instrumental motivations are critical for language learning (Thuan, 2021). Both integrative and instrumental motivation are needed to gain sufficient proficiency in a second language.

Previous related studies explained above focused on students in general, regardless of their level or year of study. Hence, this research focused on the motivation of first-year students majoring in English. As language teachers, especially those teaching second or foreign languages, it is essential to know the students' motivation, needs, and expectations in the English language so that they can devise the teaching materials appropriately and based on the functions of motivations (Sardiman, 2012). In line with this, Bradford (2007, p.

315) acknowledges that "if the students' individual goals are known, then syllabi, materials, and activities can be tailored to appeal to their values and interests." From the researchers' preliminary study, which involved interviewing some first-year students at the Department of English Education, Universitas Syiah Kuala, Banda Aceh, it was found that their motivations were rarely explored by their lecturers in the first meeting. Hence, this issue can lead to further problems later on in the following semesters, such as the difficulty of the lecturers in designing syllabuses that align with the students' motivations. Consequently, the students' expectations for foreign language learning are not met. For this reason, the current study is timely and being conducted to fill in this gap. The research question formulated in conducting this research is: What types of motivation do the first-year students of the Department of English Education, Universitas Syiah Kuala, have in learning English? Consequently, this research aims to study the types of motivation so that lecturers can put more effort into increasing and improving students' motivation in class. Students who are more driven to study persevere longer, put forth stronger efforts, learn the materials more thoroughly, and do better in class and on standardized exams.

METHOD

This research focused on exploring the first-year students' motivation in learning English at Universitas Syiah Kuala. For this quantitative research, the researchers used a survey design through a questionnaire. The respondents to this study were all 77 first-year students at the Department of English Education in 2021, consisting of 56 females and 21 males. The respondents' consent was acquired before data collection. Their criteria were first-year students, still at the beginning of the first semester, aged between 17 and 19 years old, born and raised in Indonesia (about 90 percent in Aceh, others from Medan, Padang, Riau, and Jakarta). There were 15 international students from Thailand, but they were excluded from this research because it focused on EFL students from Indonesia.

To collect data, the researchers used a questionnaire. The purpose was to learn more about the different ways that first-year students were motivated to learn English. It used a Likert scale from the Attitude/Motivation Test Battery, or MTB (Gardner, 1985), as its model. The questionnaire contained a total of 20 statements, and the students were asked to check one of the following options: strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree. From the 20 statements in the questionnaire, 10 were about integrative motivation (statements 1, 3, 5, 7, 8, 10, 13, 15, 19, and 20) and another 10 were about instrumental motivation (statements 2, 4, 6, 11, 12, 14, 16, 17, and 18)).

The forms were distributed to the students after they attended their classes in the first week of their courses at the department. They were to stay in class and fill out the questionnaire, with one of the researchers attending to any questions they had any. It took approximately 8–10 minutes for the students to fill out the questionnaire. The data gathered from the questionnaire were analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 23. In this article, the statements are coded as S1 for statement 1, S2 for statement 2, S3 for statement 3, and so forth.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the analysis of the questionnaire and interviews, this section presents the results of the types of motivation the first-year students at the Department of English

Education, Universitas Syiah Kuala, have and the reasons they have for having those motivations for learning English.

Integrative Motivation

Figure 1 shows the mean score of each statement from the respondents on integrative motivation.

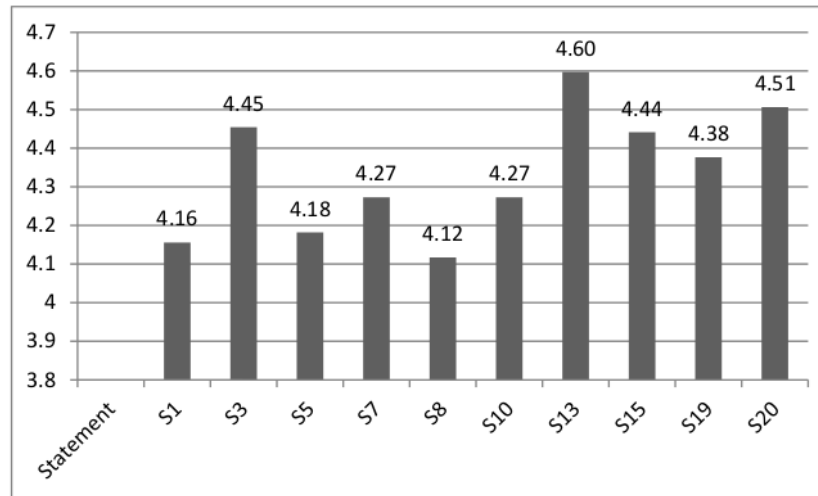


Figure 1. The integrative motivation the first-year students for learning English

Figure 1 shows that S13 has the highest score in integrative motivation ($M = 4.60$): "I enjoy having a conversation with people who speak the English language as well." It received "strongly agree" from 51 students (66.23%), and one respondent (1.29%) chose "strongly agree" toward this statement. It seems that most of the respondents are integratively motivated to study English to be able to associate with foreigners or native speakers of English (Yashima, 2002).

The second-highest scores in integrative motivation are for S20, S3, and S15. For S20, "I am determined to study English as well as I can to achieve maximum proficiency," we received $M = 4.51$. It gained positive responses of "strongly agree" from 46 respondents (59.74%), 27 respondents (35.06%) responded "agree," and only one respondent (1.29%) responded "disagree" and "strongly disagree." This implies that most of the students' desire to acquire a language is to become more culturally and linguistically assimilated into the target community; it is an attempt to become like the native speakers (Liu, 2007; Yusuf et al., 2020). For S3, "learning English helps me to be open-minded and friendly like native English speakers," with $M = 4.5$, it received "strongly agree" from 48 students (62.33%). Then, it is S15, "Learning English helps me to behave like native English speakers, e.g., using an accent and English expressions," with $M = 4.44$. A total of 41 respondents (53.24%) "strongly agree" and 31 respondents (4.25%) "agree." These two statements suggest that learning English is to acquire a variety of linguistic and cultural characteristics, including verbal ones that define the other group's members (Gardner, 1985). Here, the students have positive perceptions of English culture (Senjahari et al., 2021).

The three highest scores in integrative motivation are for S19, S7, and S10. S19, "I will be able to participate more freely in the activities of English cultural groups," received the response "strongly agree" from 38 respondents (49.35%) with M = 4.38, and nobody responded "strongly disagree." The students did not only want to learn English merely for good scores but also to be able to participate in international affairs (Yashima, 2002). Similarly, S7, "English can enable me to appreciate western films and music," had broadly similar responses to S10, "I love the language as it is such a beautiful language." Both have a mean score of 4.27. These statements indicate that students are interested in learning English because of their fondness for the language; they wanted to increase their life skills and knowledge in English to travel the world and communicate with individuals from various cultural backgrounds (Achmad & Yusuf, 2016; Yusuf et al., 2020).

Finally, for integrative motivation, the least statements receiving lower scores are S1, S5, and S8. For S5, "learning English can satisfy my interest and curiosity" (M = 4.18), received good responses from 43 respondents (55.84%) responding to "agree," 24 respondents (31.16%) responding to "strongly agree," and none responding to "disagree" or "strongly disagree." For S1, "I need English to integrate with the western culture" (M = 4.16), 44 respondents responded with "agree" (57.14%). This statement showed that these students learn English because they want to be part of the English culture (Yashima, 2002). Finally, S8, "learning English enables me to appreciate English art and literature," elicited the lowest response (M = 4.12). This statement indicates that not many students learn English to know English art and literature. Perhaps most of the English arts and literature are not compatible with their beliefs (i.e., Islam) (Yusuf et al., 2020); meanwhile, most English native speakers are non-Muslims. Compared to English, Arabic plays a bigger role in influencing the Acehnese's art and literature (Yusuf et al., 2020; Solichun, 2014).

Instrumental Motivation

Figure 2 shows the mean score of each statement from the respondents on instrumental motivation.

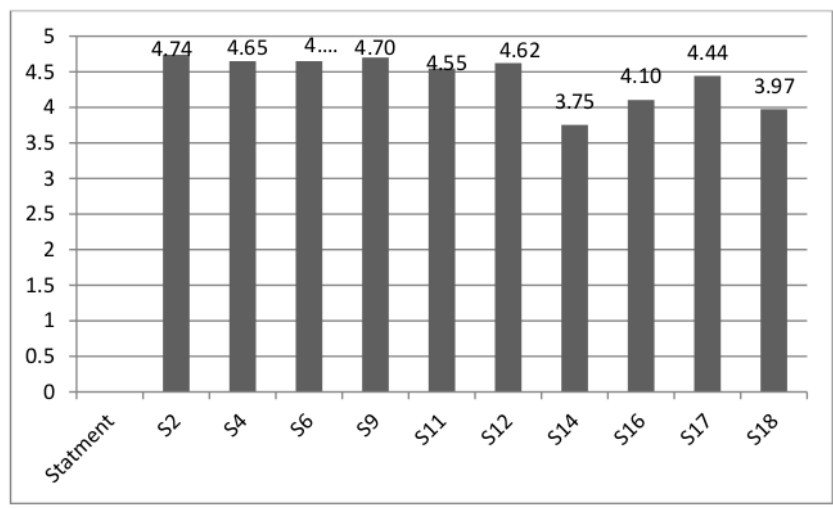


Figure 2. The instrumental motivation of first-year students for learning English

Figure 2 shows that S2 ($M = 4.74$) and S9 ($M = 4.70$) receive the highest scores in instrumental motivation. For S2, "I learn English because it will someday be useful in getting a good job" received "strongly agree" from 52 out of 77 respondents (67.53%). Consequently, S9, "Learning English can be important for me because I will be able to communicate with native speakers of English," was responded to positively by the participants, with 76.62% responding with "strongly agree" and 24.67% responding with "agree." Meanwhile, 2.59% responded "neutral," and none responded "disagree" or "strongly disagree." This infers that the students learned English because this language is considered one of the important means that can secure jobs for them in the future (Gardner, 1985; Thuan, 2021), especially jobs that involve native speakers.

The second-highest scores in instrumental motivation are for S4, S6, and S12. For S4, "Learning English is important to me because it will help me when I travel abroad," and S6, "learning English can be important for me because it will help me search for information and materials in English on the Internet," both received the same mean score ($M=4.65$). They are followed by S12, "Learning English can be important for me because it will help me to pursue my studies," which got positive responses from 51 respondents (66.23%). Overall, the respondents tended to "strongly agree" that English is one of the requirements needed to go abroad, either for travel or study (Yusuf et al., 2020). The third-highest scores in instrumental motivation are for S11 and S17. For S11, "learning English can be important for me because it will make me a more knowledgeable person" received "strongly agree" from 50 respondents (64.93%), and none chose "strongly disagree." Following this statement is S17, "Learning English will enable me to keep up with the development of the world economy, science, and technology (globalization)," which received positive responses from the students with 54.54% "strongly agreeing." These results imply that the students are eager to gain more knowledge through English and that they believe that learning English is important to make them more educated (Wimolmas, 2013).

Finally, for instrumental motivation, the statements receiving the lowest scores are S16, S18, and S14. For S16, "learning English is a graduation requirement" received varied responses ($M = 4.10$). A majority of the respondents responded positively to this statement, with 41 respondents (52.14%) who "agree" that English is a graduation requirement. The TOEFL requirement for Universitas Syiah Kuala itself is a minimum score of 475 in order for undergraduate and graduate candidates to graduate on campus (Silviyanti et al., 2020). In addition, the response to S18, "English can raise my social status," received a score of 3.97. About 25 respondents (32.46%) "strongly agree" with this, and 2 respondents (2.59%) "disagree" and "strongly disagree" with it. Senjahari et al. (2021) also found that Indonesian students perceive English as a prestigious language that has economic value. Lastly, the least mean score is for S14, "I mainly focus on using English for a class assignment and the exams" ($M = 3.75$), receiving a variety of responses, from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree." Half of the respondents (49.35%) agree with this statement, and 16 respondents (20.77%) responded "neutral" or "strongly agree." Meanwhile, 5 respondents (6.49%) responded with "strongly disagree" and 2 respondents (2.59%) responded with "disagree." This shows that the students did not largely learn English for assignments and exams, but their motives expanded to out-of-class purposes, such as linguistic (i.e., communication and interaction) and cultural (i.e., being part of the target language community) purposes to secure good jobs, travel, and study abroad.

The Comparison of Mean Scores for Integrative and Instrumental Motivations

Figure 3 shows the mean score of each type of motivation (i.e., integrative and instrumental) based on the analysis of data from the questionnaire.

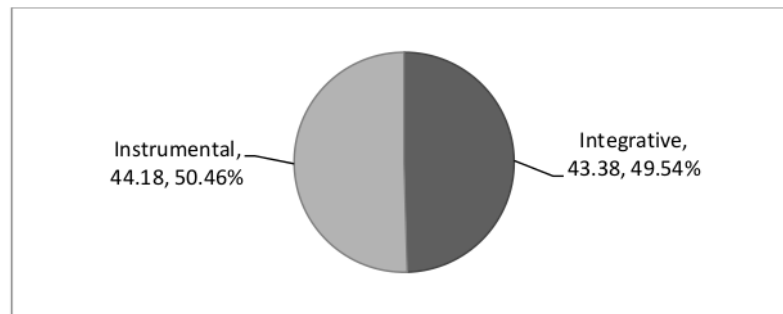


Figure 3. The mean score of each type of motivation (i.e., integrative and instrumental)

From Figure 3, it can be seen that the mean scores of both integrative motivations ($M = 43.38$) and instrumental motivations ($M = 44.18$) were not significant. The difference is only 0.92%. Hence, it can be concluded that both of these types of motivation were employed by these first-year students. Although some previous studies found that integrative motivation is better than instrumental motivation (Achmad & Yusuf, 2016; Samad et al., 2012) or vice versa (Al-Khasawneh & Al-Omari, 2015; Liu, 2007), the results of this study showed that both were equally employed by the students in this research. This finding is similar to Choubsaz and Choubsaz (2014), in which Iranian students also employed both motivation types in English language learning. Both types were used by the students for practical purposes or to be part of the target language community. This is as revealed by Dörnyei (1994) that integrative and instrumental motivations are positively related, and both serve as usefully laden learning objectives.

Moreover, V2molmas (2013) asserted that students' motivation for learning the English language can be a valuable source of information and understanding for implementing pertinent programs or activities to foster a more inspiring learning environment. Consequently, these students may establish more dedicated language study habits while participating in the programs (Dörnyei, 2019). Keller (2002) further noted that student participation increases their drive to learn by piquing their interest in it. It has been proven that ESL students who can articulate their objectives and assess their own development are more driven (Erizar, 2019). Because in the end, students who are sufficiently motivated ultimately have positive attitudes toward learning English in terms of cognition and become effective language learners with applicable cross-cultural communication (Al Harthy, 2017; Thuan, 2021).

To end with, the results of this study offer some pedagogical implications, especially to both teachers or lecturers and students in the EFL classrooms. It is vital for students who study a foreign language, such as English, to have within them the motivation to learn. Because learning a language that is not widely exposed to them in their daily lives is a struggle, therefore, teachers' or lecturers' efforts to understand the types of motivation that students have can greatly assist them in enhancing the capacity of students' learning. By

knowing and being aware of students' motivations, teachers can pave the way for effective and joyful instructions as needed by the students in class. Teachers can better develop their lesson plans to boost students' abilities by paying attention to the students' interests and necessities because motivated students learn lessons more effectively than unmotivated ones.

CONCLUSION

From the results of the questionnaires, it was found that the first-year students at the department of English Education, Universitas Syiah Kuala Banda Aceh, both have instrumental and integrative types of motivations in learning English. Even though the mean score for instrumental motivation ($M = 44.18$) is higher than the mean score for integrative motivation ($M = 43.38$), the difference is not significant (0.92%). This means that these students' integrative and instrumental motivations were essential and employed. By achieving more skill and success in the target language, both integrative and instrumental motivations benefit as a result of the students' learning.

The study has attempted to investigate the first-year students' motivation for learning English at a university in Banda Aceh. Although the findings have indicated the types of motivation that the students had and were employing in language learning, it is clear that this study also has several drawbacks. The first is its limited number of respondents, which only focused on one university; therefore, future related research must consider larger samples. Moreover, data obtained from interviews or other means of qualitative approach should also be taken into account to gain more insights into this topic.

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