

STUDENTS' MOTIVATION FOR LEARNING ENGLISH IN VIETNAMESE VOCATIONAL COLLEGES

Nguyen Thi Hong Anh
Thuyloi University, email: anhnth@tlu.edu.vn

1. INTRODUCTION

As a part of Vietnam higher education, vocational training is critical to improve the quality of labour force. The primary objective of vocational colleges is to meet the labor market's demands in terms of quantity, quality, occupation structure and training level, reaching that of developed countries in the ASEAN region and the world. As a result, a contingent of skilled laborers will be formed to contribute to increasing national competitiveness. Vocational training will also be universalized among employees. That aims at labor restructuring, income generation, sustainable poverty reduction and social security (Tien, et al., 2012). As can be seen from the common goals of vocational education and training in Vietnam, vocational students now are trained to be highly skilled ones not only for domestic industries but also for labor export. Knowledge, professional skills and language skills become the keys for their success. Therefore, foreign language in general and English in particular is the compulsory subject in all vocational colleges, aiming to help learners achieve level two in the six-level English competencies framework for Vietnam. However, students' English competency is relatively low (Tien, et al., 2012). The reasons for this situation vary. Arguably, students may lack learning motivation (Lai, 2013).

Motivation is simply identified as a factor that stimulates a person to act or to do something. In teaching and learning foreign language process, Gardner (2001) defined motivation as a combination of effort, desire

and positive effects or enjoyment to achieve the goal of language learning. Therefore, without motivation, it seems impossible for an English learner to achieve his language learning outcomes.

Motivation is a complex phenomenon, so different researchers have different ways to classify it. For example, according to Brown (2000) and Gardner (2001), there are two basic types of motivation: integrative and instrumental. In his study, Harmer (2001) mentioned and defined the terms intrinsic and extrinsic which were then frequently used in various studies. Extrinsic motivation in English learning is caused by outside factors including goals, the society students live in, and people around them. Language learners' extrinsic motivation is sometimes obtaining several rewards or avoiding some punishment. Intrinsic motivation, in contrast, comes from personal desire and curiosity to learn this language for challenge, interest, and enjoyment. Then, this learner might be motivated by the enjoyment of the process of learning itself or by a desire to make themselves feel better (Harmer, 2001).

Based on the abovementioned contextual and theoretical background, this study aims at investigating the students' motivation to learn English in Vietnamese vocational schools to answer a research question:

What are vocational students' intrinsic and extrinsic motivations for learning English?

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study exploited the quantitative method with a survey questionnaire. The questionnaire

which was adapted from Dörnyei & Csizér's one included 5 questions to obtain participants' personal information and 15 items of Likert scale. It was then administered to students in vocational colleges in Hanoi, Hung Yen, Ha Nam and Danang via Google form. After 2 weeks, 100 students including 25 male students and 75 female ones responded to the questionnaire. It did not surprise us when 39 of

them were English beginners, 49 students were at elementary level and only 12 were pre-intermediate learners. Their answers were collected and analysed with the help of SPSS version 24 to come to some conclusions.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1. What are students' intrinsic motivations?

Table 1. Intrinsic motivation

Item	Mean	Sd	SD & D (%)	N (%)	A & SA (%)
1. I feel excited when hearing English spoken.	3.75	1.12	11.1	32.3	56.5
2. I believe that I will be capable of reading and understanding most texts in English if I keep studying it	3.75	1.15	13.3	23.5	63.2
3. I am sure I will be able to write in English comfortably if I continue studying.	4.17	0.90	4.1	17.5	78.4
4. I imagine myself as someone who is able to speak English well.	4.49	0.77	3.1	8.2	88.7
5. I may work and live abroad	3.69	1.37	18.5	23.7	57.8
6. Learning English is important to me because I would like to travel internationally.	4.34	0.92	6.1	12.2	81.7
7. I am very interested in the values and customs of other cultures.	4.16	0.94	6.2	18.8	75
8. I can talk with foreigners I may meet in Vietnam and in the world	4.25	1.22	14.3	6.1	79.6
9. I find learning English really interesting.	4.04	0.95	4.1	27.6	68.3
10. Studying English can be important to me because I think it will someday be useful in getting a good job.	4.66	0.79	5.0	2.0	93
11. Studying English is important to me because English proficiency is necessary for promotion in the future	4.60	0.85	4.0	6.1	89.9

Note: M = Mean, Sd = Standard deviation, SD = strongly agree, D = disagree, N = neutral, A = agree, SA =strongly agree.

Table 1 presents the data on participants' intrinsic motivation. Apparently, all respondents had a high level of motivation to learn English.. In their opinion, learning English was interesting (M=4.04, Sd=0.95) and they wanted to practice to become better at English. In particular, 80% of participants strongly believed that they would perfect their writing skills thanks to their continuous studying (M = 4.1, Sd=0.9). Nearly 90% of

them thought that they were able to speak English fluently (M=4.49, Sd=0.7).

Moreover, most participants had a high intrinsic motivation to learn English when mastering this language brought them opportunities to become global citizens who could travel internationally (M = 4.34, Sd= 0.92) and explore the values of various cultures (M=4.16, Sd=0.94).

More importantly, nearly all respondents were well aware of the benefits of learning a foreign language. 93% of participants believed that learning English could help them to get a good job and nearly most of them felt more confident in communicating with foreigners ($M=4.25$, $Sd=1.22$).

3.2. What are students' extrinsic motivations?

Table 2. Extrinsic motivation

Item	Mean	Sd	SD & D	N	A & SA
12. I like the atmosphere of my English classes.	3.48	1.15	17.5	34.0	48.5
13. I have to learn English because without passing the English course I cannot graduate.	3.62	1.41	21.6	16.5	61.9
14. I have to study English because I don't want to get bad marks in it at university	3.69	1.34	19.6	17.5	62.9
15. Learning English is necessary because people surrounding me (parents, teachers, friends) expect me to do so.	3.70	1.39	25.5	21.4	53.1

Table 2 illustrates the results regarding learners' extrinsic motivation. Outside factors had clear impacts on participants' reasons to learn English. The pressures of graduation and examination were considered two main motivations that actually encouraged students to be involved in language lessons. More than half of the respondents tried to learn English to graduate on time ($M=3.62$, $Sd=1.41$) and to get good marks ($M=3.69$, $Sd=1.34$). Notably, the encouragement from teachers, parents and friends became the greatest external stimuli for participants' language learning ($M=3.70$, $Sd=1.39$), whereas the class atmosphere was in favor of nearly 50% of them.

The findings revealed that participants had both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations of learning English. It means that students were interested in and fully aware of the necessity and benefits of learning English, so they had strong learning needs. Moreover, students were also motivated by school policies, class atmosphere, and their close people. It is implied that a good learning environment, supportive teachers with more exciting lessons, and positive encouragement from family and friends can motivate students to learn better.

4. CONCLUSION

This study investigated the motivation to learn English among students in Vietnamese vocational colleges. However, this study has some limitations when the number of participants is relatively limited, and due to the survey questionnaire of 15 items, it cannot cover all aspects of motivation. Further research should broaden the issues such as challenges and solutions to strengthen the motivation of language learners. Last but not least, this study hopes to contribute to the literature since it can fill the gap in the research on motivation within the Vietnamese context of vocational education.

5. REFERENCES

- [1] Dörnyei, Z. (1998). Motivation in second and foreign language learning. *Language teaching*, 31(3) 117-135. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S026144480001315X>.
- [2] Brown, H. D. (2000). *Principles of Language Learning and Teaching* (4th ed.). New York: Prentice Hall.
- [3] Gardner, R. C. (2001). Integrative motivation and second language acquisition. *Motivation and second language acquisition*, 23(1), 1-19.
- [4] Harmer, J. (2001). Book review: The practice of English language teaching. *RELC Journal*, 32(1), 135-136. <https://doi.org/10.1177/003368820103200109>.
- [5] Lai, H. Y. T. (2013). The motivation of learners of English as a foreign language revisited. *International Education Studies*, 6(10), 90-101.