



International Journal of Management and Sustainability

journal homepage: <http://aessweb.com/journal-detail.php?id=5012>



ATTITUDE AND MOTIVATION IN L2 LEARNING AMONG UM MASTER STUDENTS

Xiang Yang (Alex)¹

ABSTRACT

This mini research was conducted among UM (University of Malaya) students, in particular, non-English major master students. The research was under the main purpose of figuring out a quite simple question: with the same amount of time, learning opportunity and environmental factor, what makes some people acquire and learn the language better than the others? A quick answer is that 'some people have the gift of languages, others do not,' and the intriguing search for the gift or the so called 'knack' by Gardner and Lambert (1972) mentioned that attitude and motivation could be the key to successful language learning. The hypothesis implies that learners with a positive attitude and high level of motivation, be it instrumental or integrative, will be successful in developing proficiency in the language provided with the strong set of verbal aptitude and intelligence. A questionnaire was delivered to about 20 UM master students for the research purpose, which revealed and confirmed the hypothesis in the sense that learners who were highly and positively involved in their English proficiency had positive attitude and highly motivated towards learning English. This study involved the correlation of various explanations for the apparent findings of the study. The findings led to a reconceptualization of attitude and motivation: The scope of these socio-affective factors can be seen from a learner's standpoint and also, through its pedagogical implications.

Key Words: Attitudes; Motivation; Social constructionist theory; Second language learning; Second language acquisition; English proficiency

INTRODUCTION

Over the past ten years, second language motivation theory (Gardner & Lambert, 1972; Gardner, 1985, Gardner & MacIntyre, 1993) developed rapidly. If provided the same amount of time, learning opportunity and environmental factor, what makes some people acquire the language

¹TGB110058E-mail: xiangyang@siswa.um.edu.my

easier and better than others? A possible variable would lie on the issue of gender differences whereby girls learn L2 better than boys. Other factors to L2 learning might be influenced by teacher, learning materials, learning interest, social need or even parental background. However, a quick answer is that 'some people have a knack for languages, others do not,' and the intriguing search for the 'knack' by Gardner and Lambert (1972) mentioned that attitude and motivation might be the key to successful language learning. According to Gardner and Lambert, motivation of acquiring a foreign language is affected by the attitude and readiness to identify projected through the learner. Evidence for positive correlation of English proficiency with positive attitude and being highly motivated towards learning English has been accumulating, for both instrumental (Gardner, 1960; Brown, 2000) and integrative (Nida, 1956; Liu, 2007; LoCastro, 2001).

Over a twelve-year research on attitude and motivation has been conducted throughout the United States, Canada in an effort to determine how differences in attitude and motivation affect the effect of language learning (Gardner & Lambert, 1972). Basically, motivation is divided into two different clusters of orientation which Gardner and MacIntyre (1991) classified as 'instrumental' and 'integrative' orientation. The dichotomy of instrumental orientation proposed that learning a language was for the basis of academic and career advancement while integrative orientation are steered towards social and cultural purposes.

LITERATURE REVIEW

During the past 30 years, we could see more and more theories about the attitude and motivation. In recent years, an evaluative study on the correlation among individual variables by LoCastro (1997) suggested that attitudes, ability and achievement are interrelated. In spite of the focused set of variables, individual differences are still perceived as entities that cannot be measured numerically and objectively. Aside from attitude not being an 'enduring entity' (Potter and Wetherell, 1987) subjects of study may have different interpretation and definition of attitude from the researcher. The limitations of the study on attitudes and motivation in language learning also stretches up to minor sub-sections in which the researcher and the participant do not share the same idea of a subjective entity. For instance, an Attitude and Motivation Test Battery established by Lambert and Gardner (1985) is quite hard to assess, as participants may be subjected to social pressure in answering certain questions pertaining to themselves.

Another dimension on how attitude and motivation can be looked upon is by Graham (1984) whereby he introduces the concept of assimilative motivation which showed disparity from Schuman (1978) and Brown (1983). These three researchers offer different pictures of factors in SLA and assimilative motivation refers to how the learner wishes to integrate and be one of the members of the targeted language (Graham, 1984). It is also worth noting that Graham mentioned such desire belongs to a learner that has already been exposed and in contact with the targeted community. Therefore, such theoretical framework is not generally applicable in the context of a

foreign language learner of English who didn't live in an English-spoken country before. A recent study in Wales by Baker (1992) claimed that the development of language learning in Welsh and English among children. Baker argued based on the assimilative motivation in regards to the influence of peer pressure.

Even more recent, Pierce (1995) proposed that learners 'invest' by acquiring a second language in the construct of 'investment' to 'increase their cultural value (Bourdieu, 1991). Rather than the intention of acculturation, the construct of investment centralized on building one's self-identity. Therefore, when people speak, they are investing on an identity of the targeted group's language. For an example, a foreign worker in Malaysia might invest in acquiring Malay Language in order to gain identity in the working work to benefit financially. Being able to speak different language is a valuable asset as perceived by language learners in the analysis of language acquisition (Gillette, 1994). As a beacon to convey messages, language also functions as a platform for the construction of self-identity in the society or communicative purposes. These imply L2 learners would like to view as having achieved ultimate attainment and proficient by their targeted group's counterpart.

Historical background

Traditionally in the 1920's, attitude and motivation were not given importance as one of the affective factors that influences language learning. It was considered that intelligence was the most important variable indicator of success in language learning (Henmon, 1929). This finding shifted the attention towards the development of Foreign Language Prognosis Test which determined who will fare better in learning languages (Symonds, 1903). In another major study, Carroll and Sapon (1959) found that verbal aptitude contributes to language acquisition; henceforth the Modern Language Aptitude Test (MLAT) was devised to measure the ability to capture the essence of the language at a faster rate.

However, preliminary work on attitude and motivation was undertaken by Mowrer (1950) whereby he attempts to introduce the concept of positive reinforcements by parents at home. This reward system encouraged young learners to acquire first language by providing appropriate verbal response. This triggered the first systematic study reported by Lambert in 1955 in the study of bilingualism. The investigation on an English-speaking American graduate student showed that his distinctive pattern of positive attitude towards French Language introduced the role of integrative motivation. Similar cases were also reported by Whyte and Holmberg (1956) of Americans working in Latin Americas and wished to learn the local language to integrate themselves with the locals. Further study on attitudinal differences in language learning has been conducted largely by Lambert, Hodgson, Gardener and Fillenbaum in 1960. Finally after a rigorous 12 year of testing, Gardner and Lambert published a book on 'Attitude and Motivation in Second Language Acquisition'. Eight years later, Dornyei (1980) reported that attitude and motivation should be

viewed from a different standpoint, the teachers' point of view instead of learners' and thus, the publication of 'Teaching and Researching Motivation'.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Definition

Attitude in language learning refers to the people who like the language or like the ones who speak the language. Thus, such people will have positive attitude in L2 learning. The path of their attitude will be grounded by ego-permeability which refers to different readiness of learners to expose their imperfect command of a language and disgrace themselves with inappropriate, awkward or ridiculous utterance. Based on recent studies, it is not necessarily that the younger we start to learn an L2, the better chance of success we achieve.

On the other hand, motivation can arouse and direct goal-oriented behaviors. Why people choose an action rather than others to do, and why someone has greater motivation than someone else, and the former gets success easily but the latter with the same capability gets failure? Encouragement and taste of success promote motivation. There are various forms of motivation whereby motivation can be viewed as social nature of L2 and motivation as dynamic process which undergoes a cycle. There are 3 phases of the cycle in which it needs to be generated, it has to be "maintained" and "protected" and motivational retrospection.

Educational and Social Model for language learning

As Gardner's study (1982) was largely influenced by foreign language classroom setting, his socio-educational model highlights that motivation, grounded by positive attitude that are related to four other factors or phases, is an indicator for successful language learning. Because a structured classroom was emphasized, the four aforementioned phases encompass the socio-cultural environment, individual differences, the context and its linguistic outcomes.

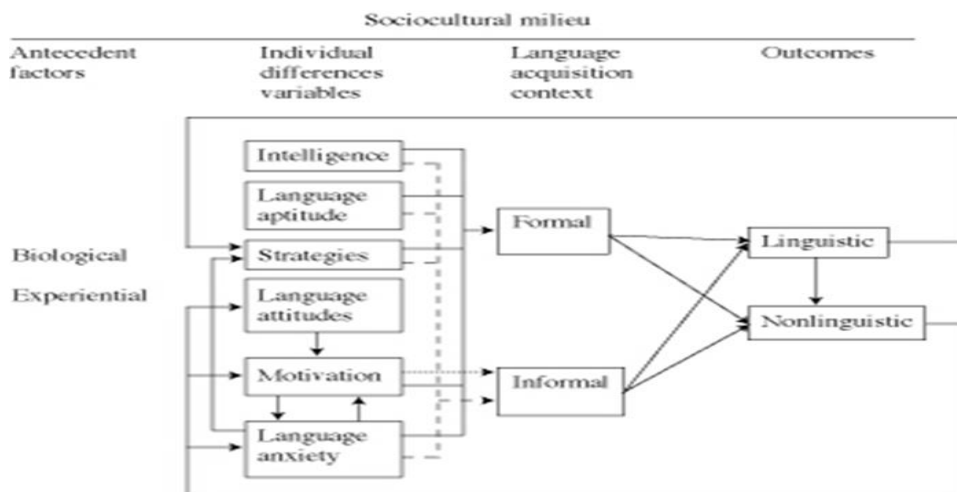


Figure-1.

Representation of educational and social Model of SLA (Gardner &MacIntyre, 1993)

Based on this figure, the social and cultural environment of the learner will determine their belief and attitude towards the targeted group's language and culture. For an example in a monolingual country akin to Korea, many believe that learning English is not necessary and other minority language group ought to assimilate and integrate into the dominant culture. The same can be said to other monolingual countries like Japan, China, Russia and so forth. On the contrary, if the socio-cultural milieu are based in bilingual and multilingual countries like Canada, Singapore and Malaysia, learning a second language is expectant (Ellis,1997).

The second part of Gardner's educational and social model deals with individual differences which are made up of four features namely, aptitude, intelligence, motivation and situational anxiety. These variables are interrelated based on two environmental contexts, the structured classroom and the natural environment. It is to be said that aptitude and intelligence poses as strong variables in the former contextual setting but play no significant role in the later. Whereas the roles of motivation and situational anxiety are equally dispersed in both contexts.

The third phase would traces the linguistic and non-linguistic outcomes. Linguistic outcomes are generally numerical based on grades of English proficiency tests. However, the non-linguistic outcomes cover a subjective area of attitudes towards the targeted language's value and culture.

Integrative Motivation

Crookes and Schmidt in 1991 identified that motivation is grounded by the learners' orientation based on the goal set in language learning. When a person likes to speak English, like English people and wishes to integrate and be identified as one of the member of the targeted language, Falk (1978) refers this to as integrative motivation. In the EFL context Japanese living in Sao Paulo, Brazil, there was a need for the Japanese to acquire the communicative competence to speak Portuguese to socially operate among the society and be its member. Therefore, it is understood that integrative motivation lies heavily within the society and the community.

Instrumental Motivation

On the contrary, instrumental motivation referred to as learning languages for pragmatic gains and practical purposes. Pragmatic gains such as getting a job, climbing up the social hierarchy, fulfilling a requirement in order to graduate and so forth subtracts the idea of integrating with the society unlike integrative motivation.

In spite of that, a large and growing body of literature suggested integrative motivation is a stronger form of motivation in sustaining the success for language studying (Taylor, Rheault and Meynard, 1977; Crookes et al, 1991; Ellis 1997;). Prior to that, Lambert and Gardner argues that integrative motivation is crucial in a structured learning setting. However, recent evidence may have suggests (Liu, 2007) that instrumental motivation propelled Chinese students in learning English. Nonetheless, integrative and instrumental orientations have been found that both components do not function exclusively and are not opposite ends of continuums. Greater gains and benefits in

attaining higher language proficiency and success may be possible if both worked together (Dornyei, 2004).

Aim

A new impetus for research in this area came from Dornyei and Csizer's (1998) strong favor of integrative motivation for long-term retention which propels the educational and social model of second language acquisition to greater heights. This paper aims to examine what roles of attitude and motivation play in L2 language learning among UM master student. Since most of them study English based on different purposes, some of them like the western culture and the language, some of them would like to get access to high-level job with the English as a tool. To achieve the aim, the following research questions were raised:

1. Which form of motivation is more powerful: instrumental or integrative?
2. What is the relationship between the attitude of a student to a second language and towards the second language community and his acquisition of this second language?
3. Whether the life-long learning attitude plays a rather important role in improving the language skill continuously?

METHODOLOGY

Participants

Based on the research questions, I try to find out the attitude and motivation of my fellow UM master students to learn the second language, or exactly, English. 38 participants were delivered a questionnaire, but actually 20 of them actively wrote down the responses. The 20 participants are from different nationalities and races with various parental backgrounds and they study different subjects in their respective faculties. Three of them are from China, who are right now doing the master of engineer, master of accountancy as well as master of education respectively; six of them are from Iran, Pakistan as well as Palestine, among which two are majoring international business and financing, one is mathematics and the other three are masters of biology, public policy and human development respectively; four participants are local Malaysian who are from the faculty of medicine and the culture center; the other 7 participants are from Indonesia, Japan, Thailand, Negril, Myanmar and Taiwan (China), who belong to faculty of science, law, social science, computer science and technology and language and linguistics respectively.

Procedure

These participants are given questions related to their process of learning English ever since the first time they touched English up until now. The questions are as follows: 1. did you like the English language when you began to learn it in your primary school? 2. The reasons you study the language. (A. the pronunciation is so beautiful; B. I like the western culture; I admire the people who speak the language. C. I always got high mark in my English exam, many teachers and friends gave me compliments; D. It is our compulsory course, I have to study it; E. English is very

important tool in the society, good English skill will land me an ideal job; F. My parents forces me to study well, they give me very high expectation.) 3. What do you feel about your English level right now, how much do you get from IELTS? 4. Would you like to continue your English language learning even when you land a good job?

Findings and Discussions

With regards to the responses, 13 participants answered they liked the language when they began to learn it in primary school, so that accounts for 63.3%. They consider their own English level as high, and their IELTS score are all above band 6, with the highest of 7. Among them 4 participants enjoy listening the pronunciation of the English language, 7 participants show their great love to the culture of the language and the people who speak the language. Another 3 participants study English very hard because during their early years of English study, they got quite high mark and a lot of encouragements and compliments from the teachers and friends, right now they continue to study English to get a decent job, their average overall IELTS score is band 5.5-6, which account for 13.3%. The last 4 participants are trained in the language center off the UM campus, that means their English has yet to meet the standard for admission to the university. They say they don't like English at all, their English mark were so poor in primary school, but they have to study English because their parents force them to study and if they don't study the language they will not pass the exam, since everyone must pass the English exam to reach higher academic level. Their average IELTS score is band 4, which account for 20%. As for life-long learning of the language, 14 participants mention that they will continue to study English even after landing a good job, along with their answers, they also add their further explanations. For instance, some of them said the learning of English language is not a burden to them, it is rather a sense of pleasure, they just learn it for fun, they always feel the beauty of the language, since they have quite high level of English proficiency. (band 7). they take the part of 70.12%. The other 6 participants will not study English any more after entering the job market. Their IELTS score is below 6 with the lowest 4. They occupy 29.88 %.

Participants	Participants who Enjoy language learning	Participants who Consider language Learning as necessity	Participants who are Forced to study the language
percentage	63.3%	13.3%	20%
IELTS band	7	5.5-6	4

Figure-1. attitude and motivation to L2 and language proficiency

Participants	Participants who continue to Study English after hunting a job	Participants who stop to study English after hunting a job
Percentage	70.12%	29.88%
IELTS band	7	4

Figure-2.life-long learning and English proficiency

Data analysis

According to the figure mentioned above, about two-thirds of the participants enjoy the English language learning. Actually, these two thirds of participants had a very solid foundation of English knowledge ever since they began to learn this language. They enjoy the beauty in this language; love the culture of that language and its people, which can be considered to have the integrative motivation of the language. And on the other hand, they have good attitude of English, they learn English because English is kind of hobby to them, rather than a task required by their teachers and parents, so their motivation is intrinsic, not extrinsic. We know that their IELTS score is rather high, around 7; about 13% of the participants learn the English language because they believe the language is a tool for them to land a good job, and it is a quite important tool in the modern society, but they don't show much appreciation to the language itself, their motivation towards the language is instrumental. In addition, their basic knowledge of English is not bad, since they used to get compliments from teachers and friends; they had a fairly good attitude to the language, so their English proficiency is not bad, band 5.5-6 of IELTS; 20% of participants don't like English at all, they are forced to learn English, they have negative attitude to the language, their motivation to the language is extrinsic, so that they got the lowest English level, band 4 of IELTS. With regards to life-long learning, more than two-thirds of participants choose to be, they really have a good command of self-regulation to the English, they'd like to pursue the highest level of English proficiency during their life time, so their motivation are both intrinsic and integrative, with the best IELTS score of band 7. With contrast, participants stop to learn English after landing a job will gradually leg behind in terms of English proficiency.

Conclusion and Insights

In our mini research, we have reviewed the literature conducted by a lot of renowned figures in this field. Based on this literature review, I tried to conduct my research using the questionnaire. I have met different people with different views to the second language learning. Questions delivered to them in order to figure out the roles attitude and motivation play during their English study. After knowing how attitude and motivation influence L2 learning, a clear picture popped into mind on how far we as language learners have come. To draw an illustration, we are greatly motivated to learn English due to the fact that we like the people who speak English and their culture. In return, success falls into hand and compliments from teachers and friends further motivates us to become experts in the field, maybe in the future. As teachers, these issues enlightened us on the importance of how a good teacher can help the L2 learners to be positive learners; The importance of creating a pleasant environment where everyone plays as well as learns the language and inspiring them that nothing is impossible to a willing heart, attitude is important; The importance of encouraging them that every mistake will be the path to one's success.

limitations

Although we have done a rather comprehensive job concerning the role attitude and motivation play in language learning, our range of research is quite limited, we only conducted a questionnaire

to more than 20 UM master students. A large data need to be conducted and analyzed and various methodologies are necessary to be used in order to get the findings more objectively. We strongly welcome any other scholars to give comments and advice.

Appendix

Participants participants who
Enjoy language learning: 63.3%IELTS band 7

Participants who
Consider language
Learning as necessity: 13.3%5.5-6

Participants who are
Forced to study the
Language: 20%4

Figure1. Attitude and motivation to L2 and language proficiency

Participants participants who continue to
Study English after hunting a
job 70.12%IELTS band 7

Participants who stop to study
English after hunting a job29.88%4

Figure 2.life-long learning and English proficiency

REFERENCES

- Baker, C., (1992)** Attitudes and Language.Multilingual Matters Ltd, Clevedon, UK.
- Gardner, Robert C. (2001, February).** Integrative motivation: Past, present and future. Temple University Japan, Distinguished Lecturer Series, Tokyo, Japan.Retrieved from <http://publish.uwo.ca/~gardner/GardnerPublicLecture1.pdf>.
- Gardner, Robert C. (1985)** Social psychology and second language learning. London: Edward Arnold.
- Gardner, Robert C. & Lambert, Wallace (1959).** Motivational variables in second language acquisition. Canadian Journal of Psychology Vol.13, pp.266–272.
- Modern Language Journal, (1997)** Special issue on Second Language Acquisition 81, iii.
- Crookes, G., & Schmidt R.W. (1991)**Motivation : Reopening the research agenda. Language

Learning, Vol.41, No.4, pp.469-512.

Gardner, R.C., & Lambert, W.E. (1972) Attitudes and motivation : Second language learning. Newbury House.

LoCastro, Virginia (2001) Individual differences in second language acquisition: attitudes, Learner subjectivity, and L2 pragmatic norms. System 29/1, pp.69-89.

Gardner, R. C., Tremblay, P. F., & Masgoret, A.-M. (1997) Towards a full model of second language learning: An empirical investigation. Modern Language Journal, Vol.81, pp.344-362.