

A classroom-based research study:

EAP English language learning motivators

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Introduction

Motivation is an important factor in the acquisition of a second language and the topic has generated numerous studies in SLA. During the mid-1990s, much research exploring the different qualities of motivation was generated (Ortega, 2009). Many of these explorations were conducted from the perspective of self-determination theory, an “influential ‘macro’ theory of human motivation developed in the late 1970s by Edward Deci and Richard Ryan, both psychologists...” (Ortega, 2009, p. 175). The heart of the theory states that humans are growth-oriented, subject to development and life-long learning (Vansteenkiste, Lens, & Deci, 2006). Gardner and Lambert (1959; 1972) suggested a person’s L2 motivation is sustained by the attitude towards the L2 and the goals, or orientations, the person has for the L2. They identified two classes of orientations: ‘integrative’ (intrinsic) and ‘instrumental’ (extrinsic). Their hypothesis was that people with integrative goals would demonstrate greater motivational effort, which has resulted in inconsistent findings over the years. Clement and Kruidenier (1983) found that there were four orientations that appeared common to all groups of learners: travel, friendship, knowledge, and instrumental. Deci and Ryan (1985) explored how this theory related to Clement and Kruidenier’s (1983) motivational orientations.

Studies further exploring the reliability of Deci and Ryan’s (1985) self-determination theory married with Clement and Kruidenier’s (1983) motivational orientations included Noels, Pelletier, Clement, and Vallerand (2000), upon which this study was based. Noels et al. (2000) sought to apply self-determination theory to L2 motivational studies, specifically comparing it to Gardner and Lambert’s (1959) model. For their study, Noels et al. (2000) developed the Language Learning Orientation Scale (LLOS). According to this, people who self-initiate a behavior and receive inherent pleasure from it are intrinsically motivated. Conversely, behavior that is imposed on the individual from the outside and viewed as a means to an end is extrinsically motivated (Ortega, 2009). In

addition, amotivation is when some people “fail to see any internal or external value to their actions”, which is characterized as “dysfunctional” (Ortega, 2009, p. 177). Noels et al. (2000) found that travel, friendship, and knowledge orientations were associated with intrinsic motivation, and instrumental reasons correlated strongly with extrinsic motivation.

The purpose of my study was to examine what motivated the participants to learn English, specifically the degree to which they were motivated intrinsically versus extrinsically. The context the study was conducted in was an English for Academic Purposes (EAP) classroom at Colorado State University. Ideally, the context-specific results of the study can be applied to real-world teaching as a pedagogical guide to motivating students. Two research questions were formulated for the purpose of this study:

1. To what extent are the subjects motivated to learn English intrinsically versus extrinsically?
2. What is the most common motivational orientation for studying English?

Based on the backgrounds of the subjects, the hypothesis for the first research question was that more subjects would be motivated by extrinsic factors than intrinsic ones in an EAP English Language Learning context. The second hypothesis was that the most common motivational orientation would be instrumental, followed by friendship, and finally knowledge.

Methodology

Participants

The participants were ten English L2 learners in an Advanced Speaking & Listening class in CSU's EAP program. Students at the EAP are generally well-educated in their home countries and come from a background of means, since they are able to study abroad. These participants were from heterogeneous L1 language backgrounds: six Arabic, three Chinese, one Japanese. Eight students were beginning their Bachelor's degree, and two students were beginning their Master's degree.

Materials

A cross sectional survey based on a 6-point Likert scale was adapted from Zubairi (2009) (see Appendix A). Participants were given a 16 question survey with eight extrinsic and eight intrinsic motivating indicators. Five of the questions were of the instrumental orientation [I], six of the friendship orientation [F], and five were of knowledge orientation [K]. This matched the questionnaire in Zubairi's study (2009), which combined components of Kruidenier's (1983) orientation study with intrinsic/extrinsic motivators in a 16 question 6-point Likert scale. This questionnaire was identical to that of Zubairi (2009), with the exception of one item: "*Reasons to learn a foreign language*". This original item was changed to "*Reasons to learn English*" on this study's instrument because the participants in the Zubairi (2009) study were not all learning the same target language.

After adapting the instrument used in the Zubairi (2009) study to fit a specifically L2 English learning context, each variable was identified as one of Kruidenier's (1983) orientations using examples from Noels, Pelletier, Clement, and Vallerand (2000). The orientation designations were: 1.) Friendship (social): I learn an L2 "because I would like to make friends with some speakers of the second language"; 2.) Knowledge (heuristic): I learn an L2 "because it will make me a more knowledgeable person" ; 3.) Instrumental (pragmatic): I learn an L2 "because it will help me get a better paying job." (Noels et al., 2000, p. 65)

Procedure

A class of 14 students was asked to complete an anonymous, voluntary survey. Out of 14, ten consented to participate. The survey took participants an average of ten minutes, though they were given an unlimited amount of time. The data was then analyzed on SPSS.

Results

What is the most common motivational orientation for studying English?

According to the mean results in Figure 1 (see Appendix B for raw data), the top three motivators for learning English as a second language are Variables 3 and 9 (tied for the primary position with an average of 5.3/6), and Variable 1 (5.2/6). Variable 3, *I learn English because I think it will be useful in getting a job someday*, is classified as an Instrumental orientation. Variable 9, *I learn English because it will allow me to meet and talk with a variety of people*, is a Friendship orientation. Finally, Variable 1, *I learn English because I will need it for my future career*, is also an Instrumental orientation. Based on the top three variables, the Instrumental and Friendship orientations both appear to be strong motivators. This is also supported by the mean of the three orientation categories (see Figure 1).

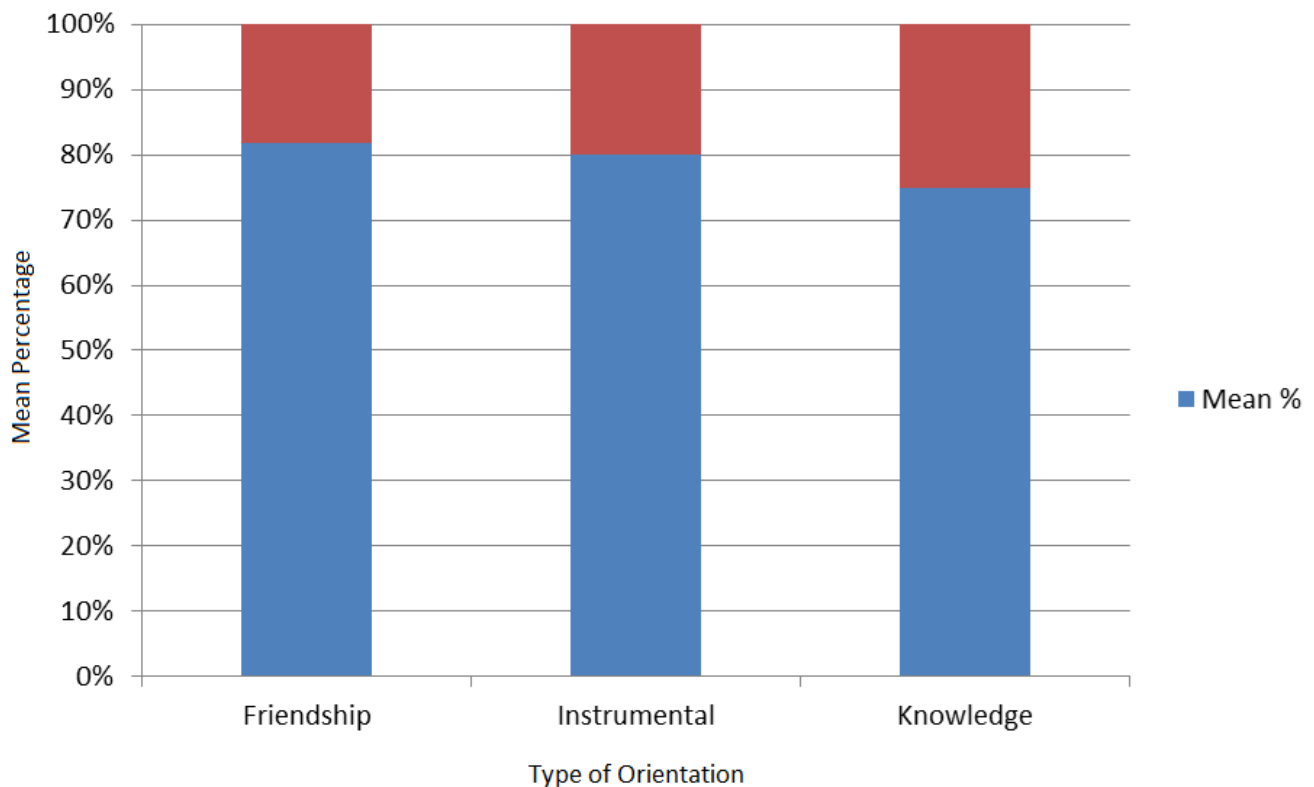


Figure 1. Mean score of participants by orientation type.

Friendship was the highest by a narrow margin with a mean of 4.9/6 or 81.7%, followed closely by Instrumental at 4.8/6, or 80.0%. The Knowledge orientation was the least motivating factor for learning English at 4.5/6, or 75.0%.

Based on these results, the first part of the second hypothesis was not supported because Friendship was found to be more motivating than Instrumental by a small margin that was not statistically significant. However, the second part of the hypothesis was supported because Knowledge was indeed the least motivating factor for learning English in the EAP context.

To what extent are the subjects motivated to learn English intrinsically versus extrinsically?

According to the data's factor analysis (see Appendix C), the mean of agreement for all extrinsic motivators was 4.75, or 79.2%. This can be compared to the mean of agreement for all intrinsic motivators, 4.68, or 78.0%. The results show no significant difference in the percentage of agreement or in the patterns distinguishing extrinsic (Variables 1-8) from intrinsic (Variables 9-16) motivators. Therefore, this research question's hypothesis that more students at the AEP would be motivated by extrinsic factors is irrelevant, given the instrument used.

However, there does appear to be a strong correlation in Appendix C between Variables 1, 3, 9, 10, and 11 (highlighted in RED). Variables 1 and 3 are extrinsic Instrumental orientations, and Variables 9-11 are intrinsic Friendship orientations. In Component 2 (highlighted in BLUE) Variables 2, 4, and 12 strongly correlated, and all three of these are Knowledge orientations, 2/3 extrinsic. Finally, Component 3 (in GREEN) shows Variable 8 Family, 13 Knowledge, and 15 Instrumental as being closely related. Again, some of these are extrinsic (1/3) and others intrinsic (2/3).

Discussion

This data suggests that rather than being extrinsically versus intrinsically motivated, students at the EAP are more likely to be motivated by Clement & Kruidenier's (1983) motivational orientations. Friendship and instrumental orientations both seem to be strong motivators for international students to learn English as a second language. However, correlations between the sixteen components could be explained in Noels, Pelletier, Clement, and Vallerand's (2000) findings, which used factor analysis to demonstrate clear distinctions between their subscales. This might be because their subscales were different from Clement and Kruidenier's (1983) orientations— Noels et al. (2000) broke down extrinsic and intrinsic motivation into criterion variables: *freedom of choice*, *perceived competence*, *intention to continue*, and *anxiety*. They also were looking into factors of amotivation, which this study did not address. The scope of my study was too small to be able to incorporate these factors, which may have a significant role to play in motivation.

Interestingly, the results of this study are similar to the results of the Zubairi (2009) study, in that the means of agreement between extrinsic and intrinsic motivators did not differ greatly. Zubairi's (2009) study compared extrinsic motivators at 92.6 % and intrinsic 94.7%; this study found 79.2% and 78.0% respectively. The fact that there is little differentiation between extrinsic and intrinsic reasons for studying a foreign language/English in both studies makes sense because the same instrument was used. It is interesting to note how much higher Zubairi's (2009) motivation percentage is. One possible reason for this study's percentage results being in the high 70s and Zubairi's (2009) being in the low 90s is that in his study subjects were not limited to being asked about learning English, but were asked 'I learn a foreign language because...'. Another could be the context, because Zubairi's (2009) study was in an EFL environment and this study was conducted in an ESL environment. Finally, Zubairi (2009) studied over 400 subjects and this study a mere ten, so the factor

analysis is less accurate than a study with more robust numbers of participants.

Suggested Modifications for the Learning Process

The small sample size is a severe limitation to this study because of how the data was analyzed. SPSS requires a larger sample size than ten to produce statistically sound results. The reason that SPSS was used in this study was because it created an opportunity for a hands-on introduction to the software. However, data analysis more appropriate to the sample size would have given a more accurate picture of AEP students' motivation.

In addition to the small sample size, if conducted again I would make several modifications to this study's instrument. Data collected was in the form of a questionnaire, which has distinct limitations, such as personal bias. It would have been more balanced if the classroom teacher's observations about what motivates her students would have been included as well. Students felt they had to hurry because the probe was conducted during their passing period in between classes. There was also a limitation due to the fact the questionnaire was in English, and some students did not understand what some questions were asking. A modification could be to conduct the probe during class time so students don't feel rushed, and give them the questionnaire in their L1 to ensure comprehension.

Because this study combined several big ideas— motivation orientation and self-determination theory— in one study, yet used the instrument of another, the accuracy of determining which variable was which orientation was subjective. For example, many of the variable questions could have been more than one orientation, such as number 13 *If I were visiting an English speaking country, I want to speak the language of the people*. This could have been travel ("visiting"), which was the orientation that was taken out because of this ambiguity, or it could have been Knowledge, or even Friendship. I made the distinction based on the examples in Noels et al. (2000), but because their procedures are

not outlined explicitly, there was still a large amount of subjectivity when determining classification in my own study.

Amotivation, a “situation in which people see no relation between their actions and the consequences of those actions”, the consequences being viewed “as a result of factors beyond their control” (Noels et al., 2000, p. 40) was not addressed in this study. However, as Deci and Ryan (1985) proposed, it may be a big factor in English as a second language motivation. In the future, I would like to explore this as a third component, in addition to intrinsic and extrinsic, with a larger sample size.

References

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Appendix A
Motivation Questionnaire

Questionnaire

Appendix A

First Language: _____

Male/Female (Please circle 1) Undergraduate student/Master's student/PhD student (Please circle 1)

Subject of study (Major): _____

Amount of time in the U.S.: _____

Please answer the questions using numbers 1-6 according to the scale:

Strongly Agree 6 Agree 5 Mildly Agree 4 Mildly Disagree 3 Disagree 2 Strongly Disagree 1

#	I learn English because:	Answer
	(extrinsic)	
1.	I will need it for my future career.	
2.	I think it will make me a more knowledgeable person.	
3.	I think it will be useful in getting a job someday.	
4.	If I have knowledge of English other people will respect me more.	
5.	My teacher(s) encouraged me to learn English.	
6.	I need to complete an English requirement to graduate.	
7.	My family encouraged me to learn English.	
8.	People will think highly of me.	
	(intrinsic)	
9.	English will allow me to meet and talk with a variety of people.	
10.	I will be able to participate in the activities of other cultural groups.	
11.	I enjoy meeting and listening to people who speak other languages.	
12.	Learning English is an enjoyable experience.	
13.	If I were visiting an English-speaking country, I want to speak the language of the people.	
14.	It is important for everyone to learn English.	
15.	I want to read the literature of another culture in the original language.	
16.	I would like to learn many foreign languages.	

Appendix B

Descriptive Statistics: Motivators for Learning English as a Second Language

Table B Descriptive Statistics

[Orientation] Variable	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
[I] VAR00001	10	3.00	6.00	5.2000	1.13529
[K] VAR00002	10	2.00	6.00	4.7000	1.25167
[I] VAR00003	10	4.00	6.00	5.3000	.67495
[K] VAR00004	10	1.00	6.00	4.0000	1.56347
[F] VAR00005	10	4.00	6.00	5.0000	.81650
[I] VAR00006	10	3.00	6.00	4.7000	1.15950
[F] VAR00007	10	3.00	6.00	5.1000	.99443
[F] VAR00008	10	1.00	6.00	4.0000	1.49071
[F] VAR00009	10	4.00	6.00	5.3000	.82327
[F] VAR00010	10	3.00	6.00	5.0000	1.05409
[F] VAR00011	10	3.00	6.00	4.9000	.99443
[K] VAR00012	10	2.00	6.00	4.6000	1.26491
[K] VAR00013	10	3.00	6.00	5.0000	1.05409
[I] VAR00014	10	3.00	6.00	4.3000	1.33749
[I] VAR00015	10	2.00	6.00	4.3000	1.49443
[K] VAR00016	10	2.00	6.00	4.0000	1.33333

Appendix C
Factor Analysis: Motivators for Learning English as a Second Language

Table C Rotated Component Matrix

	Component		
	1	2	3
VAR0000 1	.860		
VAR0000 2		.944	
VAR0000 3	.844	.334	
VAR0000 4		.824	.341
VAR0000 5	.356	.644	
VAR0000 6			.635
VAR00007 VAR0000 8			.879
VAR0000 9	.847		
VAR0001 0	.745	-.383	
VAR0001 1	.817		
VAR0001 2		.866	
VAR0001 3	.358	-.424	.790
VAR0001 4	.442		
VAR0001 5		.564	.749
VAR0001 6	.459	.477	