

Learners' Orientations in Second Language Learning: Determining Their Performance in ESL

*Khalid Mat Pardi
Nor Aziah Abd Kadir
Caroline Joseph
Rosita Aminullah
Sulaila Bakar*

ABSTRACT

Students' achievements in English as a second language (ESL) have always been an issue in Malaysia. The government has put in efforts to improve students' proficiency level of English; yet students have not been performing well. This paper is an attempt to determine the purpose of the learners in learning English and to investigate the relationship between the orientations towards their performance in ESL. A purposeful sampling in survey design was used in collecting the data. 30 Maktab Rendah Sains MARA Seriting students were chosen as the respondents. This data then was analysed to get the inferential statistics. It was later found that learners who learned English under the either integrative or instrumental orientation have no relationships towards their ESL performance.

Keywords: *English as a Second Language (ESL), Learners' Orientation, Integrative Orientation, Instrumental Orientation.*

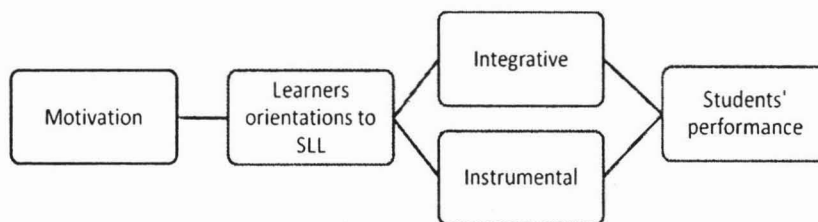
Introduction

English language plays an important role in Malaysian Educational System since British had overtaken this country. After Malaysia managed to get independence from the British, Malaysian rulers have given a status to English in Malaysian Educational System. Thus, the government had transformed all English schools into purely post-primary institutions (Barnes, 1950). Not long after that, it was mentioned in The Razak Report 1956, where Malay and English were used as official languages before Malay was selected to be the sole official language and also the main medium of instruction in education. Gaudart (1987) then stated that English was to continue to be the second language of the country where students need to attain certain level of English proficiency. All these show how important the English language is in the country.

Despite all these, Malaysian students still have problems in acquiring the language. The government has put in efforts to improve students' proficiency level of English including the implementation of Teaching and Learning Mathematics and Science in English; yet students have not been performing well.

One of the problems faced by the students is shyness as well as afraid as the main obstacle, which actually influences students' willingness to get involved in any English activities in the classroom (Lin & Warden, 2000). This finding could be true since the students are lack of skills in conversing in English. Because of their limited ability in using the language, they refuse to interact or actively involved in any activities related to the language.

In dealing with this problem, researcher needs to look at students' motivations in learning the language; in this case is English as a second language (ESL). It is important for practitioners and researchers to investigate what drives the students to learn the language. According to Gardner (1985), motivation plays a big role in affecting students' performance in language learning.



Second Language Motivation Theory: Gardner, 2002

Students' motivation in learning a language can be determined by their purpose of learning the language itself. This could be explained based on the framework above which was adapted from the Gardner's Second Language Motivation Theory, 2002 (Masgoret & Gardner, 2003).

According to Gardner (1985) learners' orientations to second language learning (SLL) can be divided into two; integrative and instrumental orientations, which both play important roles in affecting students' performance in ESL.

An investigation was made by Masgoret and Gardner (2003), focusing on the relationship of second language achievement to five attitudes or motivation variables, clearly demonstrated that the correlation between achievement and motivation is uniformly higher than that between achievement and integrativeness, and that this correlation is somewhat lower than that between achievement and attitudes toward the learning situation.

In an exploration carried out by Yashima, Zemuk-Nishide and Shimizu (2004) on Japanese adolescent learners willingness to communicate (WTC) in English as a second language, results show that those who have higher WTC scores tend to communicate more in the classroom and to ask questions or talk to teachers more frequently outside class. This finding supports that integrative orientation does affect students to score in second language learning.

However, both types of orientations are important. Many researches have been done to investigate the relationships between motivation and students' score in second language learning and the result varies. It claims that a learner might learn second language well with an integrative orientation or with an instrumental one, or indeed with both (Cook, 1991).

Although orientations do not necessarily reflect motivation (Noels & Clement, 1989), by knowing what are the students' orientations in learning English, it will benefit the teachers to plan activities that suit the needs of the students. Therefore, it is important to determine the purposes of the learners in learning English so that further actions can be taken to overcome the problems. By doing this, students' performance in SLL could be improved.

Objectives

Many other researchers had investigated the numerous motivations affecting students' performances in ESL, including the ones selected for this research. However, this research is investigating the orientations of the students on a different set of subjects. The subjects of this investigation are the Maktab Rendah Sains MARA (MRSMS) Seriting students in the aged of seventeenth.

The aim of this research is to investigate the learners' orientations in second language learning, which determining their performance in ESL. Specifically, the objectives of this research are as follows:

- i. to identify learners' orientations in second language learning
- ii. to investigate the relationships between learners' orientations towards their performance in ESL.

Literature Review

Second language learning (SLL) orientations are often correlated with or regressed to various second language outcome measures to justify the importance of an individual second language orientation relative to others. Among the many second language orientations, the integrative and instrumental orientations have received the strongest empirical attention from the field of second language acquisition.

Earlier studies showed inconclusive evidence in support of the integrative and instrumental orientations in predicting second language achievement. Chihara and Oller (1978) in their study earlier reported that there was no significance between the integrative orientation and second language proficiency. However, a recent empirical study that applied Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) for a sample of Hungarian learners of English showed that integrative orientation does play a superior role with learners' motivational effort (Csizér & Dörnyei, 2005).

Another recent Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) study with 567 Chinese English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners found that integrative orientation made no direct or indirect influences on the Chinese learners' self-evaluated English skills (Chen, Warden & Chang, 2005). These findings suggest that there are strong relationship between sets of orientations and second language outcomes in a more advanced investigation using different national samples and it is well known that the relation of second language orientations to achievement varies as a function of ethnicity and linguistic milieu (Clément & Kruidenier, 1983).

When it comes to intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, it is generally known that a high level of intrinsic motivation is linked to greater motivated behavior and persistence (Ramage, 1990), higher self-efficacy (Ehrman, 1996), stronger intention to continue second language study (Noels & Clément, 1989), less perceived anxiety, and children's enhanced academic achievement. Extrinsic motivation, on the other hands tends to indicate the opposite patterns. For studies with English as a Foreign Language (EFL) samples, it is found that both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations are associated with the successful of their second language learning. For instance, Wen (1997) reported that intrinsic-oriented as well as extrinsic-oriented motivations could lead to success for learners of Chinese as a foreign language. Kang (2001) also examined the motivational basis of Korean EFL learners using exploratory factor analysis and found that both intrinsic and extrinsic motivations were involved with second language achievement. However, Taiwanese EFL students were mainly motivated by requirement rather than by either intrinsic or extrinsic orientation (Lin & Warden, 2000).

In this regard, it is noted in the literature that second language orientations exert their influences on second language achievement indirectly through mediator variables such as motivational intensity or learners' perceived self-confidence (Masgoret & Gardner, 2003). This suggests that the relationship between various second language orientations and achievement cannot be accurately determined without considering the full structural relationships among factors directly or indirectly affecting second language achievement.

Integrative Orientation

Integrative orientation reflects the learner's willingness or desire to be like a representative member of the other language community (Gardner & Lambert, 1972). It also reflects the learner's high level of effort to learn the language of a valued the second language community in order to communicate with the group.

According to Masgoret and Gardner (2003), integrative orientation drives those who expressed an interest in learning the language in order to interact, meet, socialize, become friends, etc., with members of the other community would be more open than those who did not express such reasons. It presents reasons for learning a second language that emphasize the notion of identification with the community.

Instrumental Orientation

Instrumental orientation is characterized by a desire to gain social recognition or economic advantages through knowing a second language (Gardner & Lambert, 1972). It is also characterized by an interest of learning second language for pragmatic and utilitarian benefits such as a high salary, power or career (Johnson, 2001). Masgoret and Gardner (2003) later added that instrumental orientation presents practical reasons for learning the language, without implying any interest in getting closer socially to the language

community. Second language orientation does not necessitate choosing either integrative or instrumental orientation. Both types are important. A learner might learn second language well with an integrative orientation or with an instrumental one, or indeed with both (Cook, 1991).

Methodology

Participants

30 MRSM students (N = 30) are chosen as the respondents in this study. The students are taken from one class of Form 4, 2012. Since this study is done only to see the relationship between students' orientations in second language learning and their performance, which is in the specific location, and it is not to generalize the population, a Purposeful Sampling method was used.

Instrument

In order to collect the data, the researcher had designed a set of questionnaire as the instrument for this study. The instrument consisted of two sections - Section A (integrative orientation) and section B (instrumental orientation). Each section has four items and the answer is based on Likert Scale from 1 (strongly agree) to 2 (agree), 3 (disagree) and 4 (strongly disagree).

Analysis

The data collected in this study has been analyzed by using the Pearson Correlation (r) analysis to see the relationship between learners' grade (dependent variables) and learners' orientations in learning ESL – integrative and instrumental (independent variables).

Data Analysis

The questionnaires that have been distributed consist of few questions related to the two orientations. It has been divided into two sections namely, Section A (integrative orientation) and Section B (instrumental orientation). Four questions were asked under each section.

A close examination on the table shows that the highest total score of learners' orientation in ESL is integrative orientation, which is 255 scores. The items tested under this orientation were; *I learn English because I like to communicate with others, I enjoy reading English materials (novel, storybooks, magazines, etc.), I enjoy learning English at school and I learn English because I love the language.*

The total score for learners' who profess instrumental orientation in ESL is 207. The score is made up from the four tested items under the instrumental orientation, which are *English is important to further my study, mastering English will widen up my prospect of career, I learn English to pass in my exam, and I must learn English to achieve my ambition.*

In short, most students learn ESL based on integrative compared to instrumental orientation. This might be due to the level of awareness among the students. They seem to be aware of the importance of knowing and acquiring English to be fit in the community.

Table 1(a): Correlation between integrative orientation and ESL performance.

		Grade	Integrative
Grade	Pearson Correlation	1	.065
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.733
	N	30	30
Integrative	Pearson Correlation	.065	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.733	
	N	30	30

Table 1(a) above shows the relationship between students who learn English by integrative orientation and their ESL performance. From the table, the Pearson correlation $r = .065$ shows that there is a weak correlation between both variables. This correlation is insignificant where $p > 0.05$ ($p = .733$). The null hypothesis cannot be rejected where there is no relationship between integrative orientation and learners' ESL performance.

Table 1(b): Correlation between instrumental orientation and ESL performance

		Grade	Instrumental
Grade	Pearson Correlation	1	-.098
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.605
	N	30	30
Instrumental	Pearson Correlation	-.098	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.605	
	N	30	30

Table 1(b) above on the other hand, shows the relationship between students who learn English by instrumental orientation and their ESL performance. Based on the table, we can see that the Pearson correlation $r = -0.098$ shows that there is also a weak correlation between the tested variables. This correlation is insignificant where $p > 0.05$ ($p = .605$). Therefore, the null hypothesis also cannot be rejected where there is no relationship between instrumental orientation and learners' ESL performance.

Findings and Recommendations

Based on the results, it can be concluded that there is no relationships between students' orientations in second language learning towards their performance. All results show that there are only weak correlations in the samples that might occur by chances, which happen due to the small number of respondents.

The findings of this study support what has been claimed by Noels and Clement (1989) who said that orientations do not necessarily reflect motivation. One might profess an integrative orientation in language study but still may or may not be motivated to learn the language, vice-versa. It also brings the idea that there are other factors determining students' performance in ESL such as learners' attitudes.

For future studies, it is recommended that the researchers investigate the relationships between students' orientations and their attitudes in second language learning towards their ESL performance.

Conclusion

It is important for the teachers to know what drives the students in learning English as a second language (ESL). By knowing this, teachers would be able to find some ways in teaching them in order to improve their performance in ESL.

Many researchers have identified two main orientations for students in second language learning, namely integrative and instrumental orientations. Some of them have found that the integrative orientation is a better predictor of second language outcomes than the instrumental orientation (Tae-Li Pae, 2008), while some others found it differently (Warden & Lin, 2000). The finding of this study however shows that the relationship between learners' orientations towards their performance in ESL is insignificant.

All in all, the exact nature of the relationships between the instrumental and integrative orientation, seems to be unclear because of the inconsistent findings reported on the relationships between the instrumental orientation, integrative orientation, and second language achievement (Chihara & Oller, 1978; Gardner & Lambert, 1972; Gardner & Santos, 1970). Therefore, more studies should be carried out in the future to investigate the relationship between learners' orientations in learning ESL and their performance.

References

- Chen, J. F., Warden, C. A., and Chang, H.-T. (2005). Motivators That Do Not Motivate: The Case Of Chinese EFL Learners And The Influence Of Culture On Motivation. *TESOL Quarterly*, 39, pp. 609–633.
- Chihara, T., and Oller, J. W. (1978). Attitudes and Attained Proficiency In EFL: A Sociolinguistic Study Of Adult Japanese Speakers. *Language Learning*, 28, pp. 55-68.
- Cle´ment, R., and Kruidenier, B., (1983). Orientations in Second Language Acquisition: I. The Effects Of Ethnicity, Milieu, and Target Language on Their Emergence. *Language Learning*, 33 (3), pp. 273–291.
- Cook, V. 1991. *Second Language Learning and Language Teaching*. London: Edward Arnold.
- Cook, V. 2001. *Second Language Learning and Language Teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Csize´r, K., and Do`rnyei, Z. (2005). Language Learners' Motivational Profiles and Their Motivated Learning Behaviour. *Language Learning*, 55, pp. 623–669.
- Ehrman, M.E. (1996). *Understanding Second Language Learning Difficulties*. Sage, Thousand Oaks, CA.
- Gardner, R. C., and Lambert, W. E. (1972). *Attitudes and Motivation in Second Language Learning*. Rowley, MA: Newbury House.
- Gardner, R. C. (1985). *Social Psychological and Second Language Learning: The Role of Attitude and Motivation*. London, Edward Arnold.
- Gardner, R. C., and Santos, E. H. (1970). *Motivational Variables in Second Language Acquisition: A Philippine Investigation (Research Bulletin No. 149)*. London, Ontario, Canada: University Of Western Ontario.
- Gardner, R. C., and Tremblay, P. F. (1994). On Motivation, Research Agendas and Theoretical Frameworks. *The Modern Language Journal*, 78, pp. 359-368.
- Gaudart, H. (1987). A Typology of Bilingual Education in Malaysia. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*. 8 (6), pp. 529-552.
- Johnson, K. (2001). *An Introduction to Foreign Language Learning and Teaching*. England: Pearson Education Limited.
- Kang, D. -H. (2001). Foreign Language Learning Motivation Revisited: A Longitudinal Study. *Foreign Languages Education*, 8, pp. 223–244.
- Lin, H. J., and Warden, C. A. (2000). Existence of Integrative Motivation in an Asian EFL Setting. *Foreign Language Annals*. 33 (5), pp. 535–545.
- Masgoret, A.M., and Gardner, R.C. (2003). *Attitudes, Motivation, And Second Language Learning: A Meta Analysis Studies Conducted by Gardner and Associates*.
- Noels, K. A. (2001). *New Orientations In Language Learning Motivation: Towards A Model Of Intrinsic, Extrinsic And Integrative Orientations And Motivation*. In Z. Dornyei & R. Schmidt (Eds.), *Motivation And Second Language Acquisition (Tech. Rep. No. 23, Pp. 43-68)*. Honolulu, Hi: University Of Hawaii At Manoa, Second Language Teaching And Curriculum Center.
- Noels, K.A., and Clement, R. (1989). Orientations To Learning German: The Effects of Language Heritage on Second Language Acquisition. *Canadian Modern Language Review*, 45, pp. 245-257.
- Ramage, K. (1990). Motivational Factors and Persistence in Foreign Language Study. *Language Learning*, 40, pp. 189–21a.

- Tae-LI Pae. (2008). Second Language Orientation and Self-Determination Theory: A Structural Analysis of The Factors Affecting Second Language Achievement. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology*.
- Wen, X. (1997). Motivation and Language Learning with Students of Chinese. *Foreign Language Annals*, 30(2), pp. 235–251.
- Yashima, T., Zemuk-Nishide, L., and Shimizu, K. (2004). The Influence of Attitudes and Effect on Willingness to Communicate and Second Language Communication. *Language Learning*. 54(1), pp. 119-152.

KHALID MAT PARDI, NOR AZIAH ABD KADIR, CAROLINE JOSEPH, ROSITA AMINULLAH, SULAILA BAKAR. Universiti Teknologi MARA (Pahang).