

Language learning motivation of Vietnamese EFL students and their attitudes towards classroom factors

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ABSTRACT

Motivation has long been considered as a significant factor, remarkably contributing to the success of second language acquisition. The current study focuses on investigating the socio-psychological orientations of Vietnamese-speaking English learners. A survey was administered to 74 non-English majoring undergraduates in four IELTS preparation courses at the pre-intermediate and intermediate levels. The questionnaire included ten statements on the students' integrative and instrumental motivations for language learning, as well as ten questions about their attitudes towards four classroom factors: physical conditions, teaching styles, teachers, and success. SPSS was utilized to analyse the collected data by percentage, mean of frequency, and standard deviation. The statistics revealed that participants were generally motivated at a high level with an inclination towards instrumental motivation. Additionally, the participants of the study expressed positive attitudes towards physical classroom facilities, teaching methods, teachers, and learning achievements in their classrooms, which significantly influenced their decision to enroll in English courses. The study's findings were used to generate discussion and pedagogical implications concerning approaches for increasing students' enthusiasm to learn a foreign language. Some recommendations were made for further research on what motivates people to learn a foreign language.

1. Introduction

Over the last five decades, there has been a progressive shift in emphasis away from teaching and toward learners and learning in the domain of second language acquisition. For that reason, several linguists have been increasingly interested in the factors that contribute to some students' superior acquisition of the target language, with the goal of maximizing the effectiveness of educational processes. The concept of motivation in language learning has arisen as a significant subject of scholarly research in various academic areas, notably Gardner and Lambert (1959, 1972), Gardner (1985), Krashen (1988), Brown (2000), and Dörnyei (2003). At "its most basic level", (Harmer, 2001, p. 51) interpreted learning motivation as "some kind of internal drive which pushes someone to do things in order to achieve something". Motivation has an undeniable effect on how well people learn, so the author did this research to find out what motivates the participants to study English and how satisfied they are with classroom factors.

2. Literature review

2.1. Language learning motivation: Definition and significance

Regardless of how straightforward and brief the term “motivation” appears to be, no single theory has yet fully conveyed its complexity in meaning. While motivation theories are predicated on human nature assumptions (Deci & Ryan, 1985), Ellis (1994) viewed motivation as the effort that learners make to acquire a second language as a result of a need or desire to do so. More specifically, Gardner (1985, p. 50) hypothesized that the interpretation of this term underlies the reasons for “an organism” to act as it does. He listed three variables of motivation in language acquisition, including the learners’ effort towards a learning objective, their desire to achieve that goal and their favourable sentiments regarding the language they are learning.

Concerning the significance of learning motivation, Ames (1990, p. 409) quoted the saying by the US former Secretary of Education, Terrel Howard Bell, “There are three things to remember about education. The first is motivation. The second one is motivation. The third one is motivation.” By the same token, when examining the critical position of learning motivation, Awan, Noureen, and Naz (2011) referred to a lack of motivation as a significant impediment to learning and a substantial contributor to the decline of educational standards. Motivation, as Parsons, Hinson, and Brown (2001) discussed, is a critical factor in the learning procedure. Both learning and motivation are necessary components of accomplishing an academic objective. Students acquire new knowledge and skills through learning, and motivation encourages them to continue the process. In a nutshell, one thing that is certain about both the past and the future is the fundamental position of motivation in educational practice.

2.2. Taxonomy of language learning motivation

According to Lightbown and Spada (1999), motivation in foreign language acquisition is quite complex to study and can be interpreted by two factors: the learner’s communicative needs and their attitudes towards the target language community. Harmer (1991, p. 03) employed the term “goal” to differentiate between two types of motivation in second language learning, which are “short-term goal” and “long-term goal”. The former relates to the students’ wish to achieve something in the near future, such as earning a high score or passing an examination. The latter one, “long-term goal,” refers to the learners’ desire to communicate with people who speak the target language or to seize better job opportunities in the future.

Ryan and Deci (2000) and Passer and Smith (2004) introduced the terms “intrinsic” and “extrinsic” to describe the nature of language learning motivation. According to those academics, intrinsic motivation refers to the learners’ desire for competence and self-determination, while extrinsic motivation is based on external circumstances. To explain, when learners are motivated by things outside of themselves, they work toward goals like getting a reward or avoiding punishment.

Gardner and Lambert (1959, 1972) distinguished between “integrative motivation” and “instrumental motivation” in their early work on motivation in language learning. This socio-educational approach gained widespread acceptance and became popular among linguistics professionals. Saville-Troike (2006) characterised integrative motivation as an interest in socializing with the language speakers or integrating with the target community through the use of a foreign language, whereas instrumental orientation emphasized practical goals for language acquisition, such as academic success, career advancement, or business opportunities.

2.3. Classroom factors affecting language learning motivation

What learners encounter in their classrooms is believed to play a critical role in their motivation to learn. To further elucidate this point, Harmer (1991, p. 05) listed four classroom factors that affect learning motivation “under the headings of physical conditions, method, the teacher, and success.” Specifically, favourable studying settings, including physical factors in the classroom such as technological equipment, quiet space, or a ventilated room, would provide the students with a relaxing environment for a productive study session. Harmer (1991) stated regarding the second element, “If the students lose confidence in the method, they will become demotivated” (p. 05). Expressively, if the style of instruction is not interesting, the student’s motivation to learn will undoubtedly decrease. While experts have debated which teaching approach is the best, Harmer (1991) asserted that the tactics for earning students’ trust belong to the most influential factor - the instructor. With a strong attachment to the teacher, students will be more enthusiastic about language studying. As Harmer (1991) stated, the teacher’s personality, rapport, sympathy, and mastery of knowledge can all draw students’ attention in language classrooms. The final aspect is success, which relates to the reasonable amount of challenge in the learning process as defined by the teacher. Harmer (1991) argued that presenting learners with extremely tough assignments could have an unanticipated effect on their motivation. On the other hand, entirely successful learning discourages learners from putting forth effort in class. As a result, in his hypothesis of “comprehensible input” developed in 1982, Krashen (1982) introduced the formula “ $i + 1$ ”, in which “ i ” is the present language proficiency level of the students. He emphasized the importance of language input being somewhat beyond the level of learners’ competency in order to facilitate the most productive language acquisition.

2.4. Recent research related to learning motivation

The theories of the eminent linguists mentioned above have guided a wide variety of studies on learning motivation in second language acquisition. For example, Siriluck and Sirithip (2002) conducted a study whose findings unequivocally demonstrated a greater degree of integrative motivation in students with high English proficiency levels compared to the group of low achievers. As regards to instrumental motivation, however, no significant difference was observed between the two groups of samples. Additionally, the researchers also discovered a greater motivation among learners with better English performance than the group of learners with lower English achievement.

Similarly, Nikitina and Furouka (2005) administered a survey to 74 freshmen at Universiti Malaysia Sabah to ascertain the nature of their learning orientation for the Russian language. The data obtained from the first survey revealed that students’ academic performance in learning Russian was unrelated to their attitudes towards the target language’s people and country. The second questionnaire helped the researchers to discover a change in learners’ attitudes towards the target language’s community and lifestyle. To be more specific, the cohort of students developed a greater appreciation of Russia and its culture. The findings demonstrate that learning motivation is a dynamic rather than a static phenomenon.

In 2008, Guilloteaux and Dörnyei (2008) conducted their study to investigate the correlation between teachers’ motivational teaching practices and their students’ motivation to learn the target language. The responses by 27 language instructors and over 1300 students in 40 ESOL classrooms in South Korea indicated positive correlations between instructors and students in the context of second language learning motivation. In other words, the motivational practices conducted by the instructors are associated with an increase in the levels of learners’ motivated learning behaviours and their motivation.

In Ghazvini and Khajepour (2011), the authors recruited 123 second-year male and female high school students as their research sample to investigate the attitudes and motivations of Iranian students toward English learning. The instrument employed in the study was a questionnaire with 18 items designed to achieve the study's objectives. The results indicated that female students are more integratively motivated to learn English than their male counterparts. Additionally, girls are more inclined toward bilingualism and have a more positive perception of English learning than the group of boys. However, there wasn't much of a difference between integrative and instrumental motivation among high school students who chose to learn English as a second language.

Having a common interest in learning motivation, Ratanawalee (2012) carried out an empirical study with a sample of 30 first-year university students at Thammasat University in Thailand to examine the level of integrative and instrumental motivation in the English language learning. The second part of the survey, including open-ended questions, also provided the researcher with information about students' language learning difficulties, which negatively influence their learning motivation in English classes. The research findings indicated that the participants were stimulated by both integrative and instrumental sources of motivation to a high degree, and they were more instrumentally motivated. The participants also ranked their writing skills as the area in which they found it most challenging.

In the same token, Ersanli (2015) employed the Morgan-Jinks Student Efficacy Scale and the Language Learning Orientations Scale developed by Noels, Pelletier, Clément, and Vallerand (2003) as the research instruments to examine the correlation between eighth-grade students' learning self-efficacy and their motivation to study foreign languages. The data collected from 257 secondary students from various high schools in Turkey showed a weak negative correlation between students' motivation for English language learning and their self-efficacy beliefs. Additionally, the results were analysed in terms of the participants' demographic characteristics, such as their gender and parental education level. It was discovered that the students' motivations for language learning differ substantially in a way that favours girls. However, no statistically significant difference between boys and girls in their beliefs about academic self-efficacy was detected. The findings regarding students' motivations for language learning in relation to their parents' level of education indicated a significant difference between participants whose parents were more educated and those whose parents were less educated. On the contrary, students with university-educated parents had the lowest self-efficacy, while those with primary and secondary school-educated parents had significantly greater self-efficacy.

More recently, Tatjana, Carlos, and János (2022) conducted a study to explore the international students' motivations for learning Hungarian in Budapest, the capital city of Hungary. The group of authors held in-depth interviews with 17 international students who were given the Stipendium Hungaricum scholarship and achieved a Hungarian language proficiency level of A1 to B1. The interview questions were developed based on the Dörnyei's L2 Motivational Self System and the Taguchi, Magid, and Papi scales. Thematic analysis was employed to examine the information gathered. The findings demonstrated that both integrative and instrumental reasons motivated the international participants to study Hungarian. Their integrative orientation, on the other hand, was more common than their instrumental purposes.

Despite the wealth of literature on the subject of language learning motivation, there is a dearth of empirical studies on the motivation of Vietnamese-speaking learners. Motivating students to study English takes precedence over all other elements of any EFL (English as a Foreign Language) teacher's work. This appetite has inspired the author of this research to explore the motivational orientations of non-English tertiary students in IELTS (International English

Language Testing System) classes, as well as their perceptions about classroom aspects contributing to their drive for English learning.

2.5. Research questions

The following three research concerns were addressed in this study:

1. To what extent are Vietnamese university students motivated to study English for the IELTS test?
2. Is their motivation in studying English for the IELTS test more integrative or instrumental?
3. What are their perceptions of the classroom characteristics influencing their motivation to study English for the IELTS test?

3. Methodology

3.1. Research participants

This study recruited 74 students from four classes at a language center in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. They are convenient samples because the researcher was one of two teachers instructing the four classes. The population consisted of 41 females and 33 males aged 19 to 23 in four courses of IELTS preparation. 36 students were classified as pre-intermediate level (Pre-IELTS), whereas the remaining 38 students were in two intermediate classes (IELTS band 4 - 5.5). All of the participants were non-English majors from various institutions and colleges throughout Ho Chi Minh City. They attended English sessions twice a week, for a total of four hours per week. The students had been studying at the language center for at least two months. A consent form was sent to the participants prior to the completion of the survey to ensure the voluntariness of the data collection process. The respondents took the survey anonymously, and the data obtained was kept confidential as well.

3.2. Research instruments

The data for this study was gathered using a survey consisting of twenty items. The questionnaire was broken into two sections and used a five-point Likert scale with responses set on a continuum from strongly agree to strongly disagree. In the first section of the questionnaire, five odd-numbered statements focused on instrumental motivation, whereas five even-numbered ones referred to the integrative orientation. The second section included 10 items that addressed four aspects of the classroom: physical conditions (items 12 and 18), teaching style (items 14 and 19), teachers (items 11, 13, 15, and 17), and student achievement in learning (items 16 and 20). The respondents were invited to provide further remarks in this section if they disagreed with the claims. Individuals completed the survey in around 10 minutes, and their anonymity was maintained to ensure that the data collected was reliable. Based on the Attitude/ Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) of Gardner (1985), the author developed eight questions about the motivation for learning (items 2, 3, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, and 10), while the remaining items were self-constructed. In spite of several available questionnaires for investigating the motivation, such as the Language Learning Orientations Scale proposed by Noels et al. (2003), and the Motivation Orientation of Language Teaching (MOLT) developed by Guilloteaux and Dörnyei (2008), the AMTB was chosen for adaptation in this study for a variety of reasons. To begin with, this investigation was guided by Gardner's (1985) theory of linguistic motivation. Second, MOLT's concept of integrative motivation is viewed as a revision of Gardner's (1985) original. Following that, whereas Noels et al. (2003) categorised motivation into intrinsic and extrinsic components, motivational factors in AMTB were classified into integrative and instrumental orientations, which corresponds to the research questions. Additionally, AMTB is more adaptable to a variety of study purposes and circumstances.

3.3. Data analysis

SPSS 22 (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) was used to analyse the data in this study. Firstly, samples' replies were coded as numerical data. To be precise, the response "Strongly Agree" was assigned a score of 5, while "Strongly Disagree" was assigned a score of 1, with 4, 3, and 2 in between. Following that, descriptive statistics were used to calculate the mean and standard deviation of the participant selections. Specifically, the closer the response means are to 5, the greater the students' concurrence with the statement. Respondents whose answers had a mean of 3.68 or higher were classified as high-motivation learners; those with a mean of less than 2.33 were low-motivation learners, and those with a mean of between 2.34 and 3.67 were ranked as medium-motivation learners. For the inspection of the classroom aspects influencing motivation, tables were created with the frequencies and percentages for each question. To illustrate the summary of responses for each type of classroom component, bar charts were implemented. Finally, based on the research findings, the author formed a conclusion and offered some strategies as well for EFL teachers to more successfully motivate their students in English study.

4. Result and discussion

4.1. Research findings

4.1.1. Students' motivation for language learning

Concerning desire for language acquisition, participants expressed that they were primarily motivated in statements 1, 5, 7, 9, and 10. The answers to questions 2, 3, 4, 6, and 8 provided an indication of the moderate motivations of the 74 participants in this research.

The first table summarizes and ranks, in descending order of mean scores, the instrumental motivations for English learning among students in the four IELTS classes. The results clearly demonstrated the students' overall high degree of instrumental motivation for English learning, with an average mean score of 4.22. The majority of samples confessed that they learned English to improve their career opportunities or to satisfy the criteria of their university studies, as respectively evidenced by the two greatest mean scores of 4.78 and 4.61. Statement number 3, referring to equipping English skills to become more knowledgeable people, shows the lowest mean score with 3.65 and is regarded as a medium level of instrumental encouragement.

Table 1

Non-English majored students' instrumental motivation in language learning

No.	Statements	N = 74		Motivation Level
		M	SD	
Item 5	Fluency in English is useful in getting a good job.	4.78	0.41	High
Item 7	I learn English for the requirements of my university graduation.	4.61	0.49	High
Item 9	Knowledge of a foreign language makes people respect me more.	4.14	0.88	High
Item 1	Being proficient in English is helpful when I travel abroad.	3.93	0.92	High
Item 3	Studying English makes me a more knowledgeable person.	3.65	0.96	Medium
	Overall	4.22	0.73	High

Note: M: Mean; SD: Standard deviation

Source: Data analysis result of the research

The data collected from responses about integrative motivation in English learning by the group of participants is shown in Table 2. As illustrated in the statistics, the respondents had a moderate level of integrative motivation for English learning, with a total mean score of 3.19. They were greatly stimulated by the desire to enjoy various forms of audio-visual pleasure and comprehend publications in English, as evidenced by the highest mean score of 4.00. On the other hand, studying English for the purpose of involving themselves in the activities of international communities was the least agreeable among the respondents, as illustrated by the mean score of 2.70. Among the five statements about integrative motivation, item number four, investigating whether exploring English lifestyles was a convincing reason for taking English courses, generated a noticeable controversy among the sample, with a mean score of 2.88, ranging from 1.77 to 3.99.

Table 2

Non-English majored students' integrative motivation in language learning

No.	Statements	N = 74		Motivation Level
		M	SD	
Item 10	If I have English skills, I can understand music, movies, newspapers, etc., in English.	4.00	0.74	High
Item 2	Proficiency in English allows me to promote Vietnamese culture to foreigners.	3.35	0.90	Medium
Item 6	Studying English helps me communicate more easily with English speakers.	3.00	0.88	Medium
Item 4	Mastering English enables me to explore English lifestyles.	2.88	1.11	Medium
Item 8	I need English to participate more freely in many activities of intercultural groups.	2.70	1.02	Medium
	Overall	3.19	0.93	Medium

Note: M: Mean; SD: Standard deviation

Source: Data analysis result of the research

Table 3 summarizes and compares two motivational clusters found among the group of IELTS learners. The average mean score of 3.71 demonstrates the fact that students in the four classes were strongly driven to improve their English skills. Additionally, the figures confirm that the mean score for instrumental motivation ($M = 4.22$) is significantly higher than the mean score for integrative motivation ($M = 3.19$), implying that instrumental factors predominately contribute to participants' high motivation for English learning in general. Despite the fact that this study was done in a new setting with a different sample size, its findings resemble those of Ratanawalee (2012) and Nguyen (2019) and contradict what Tatjana et al. (2022) concluded in their paper.

Table 3

Comparison of non-English majored students' integrative and instrumental motivation

Types of Motivation	Number of participants	Means	Standard Deviation	Level of Motivation
Instrumental	74	4.22	0.73	High
Integrative	74	3.19	0.93	Medium
Overall	74	3.71	0.83	High

Source: Data analysis result of the research

4.1.2. Students' attitudes towards classroom factors

The extent to which students were satisfied with four classroom factors that contributed to their motivation to study English was represented in four tables and four figures. Specifically, Table 4 and Figure 1 showed data on physical conditions, while information related to teaching methods was depicted in Table 5 and Figure 2. Responses to teacher and success factors were demonstrated in Tables 6 and 7, accompanied by Figures 3 and 4, respectively.

In terms of physical conditions, the 30m²-classrooms are quite well-equipped with a blackboard, a microphone, four loudspeakers, a projector, a desktop computer, central air-conditioning, LED lighting, and a wireless internet connection. As is shown in Figure 1, 89.2 percent of respondents expressed satisfaction with the surroundings because the equipment provides them with a comfortable learning environment in which they can effectively concentrate on their lessons. Interestingly, one of the two respondents deciding "Disagree" to statement number 18 suggested chairs with seat cushions for learners. Contrary to the high level of satisfaction regarding the classroom equipment, up to twenty-five participants (33.8%) expressed discomfort with the class size. Although the maximum number of students in each class is 23, twelve respondents clearly stated that they preferred learning in smaller groups, which is about 10 students.

Table 4

Descriptive statistics of participants' perception of physical conditions

Statements	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Item 18 - I have a convenient learning environment with the facilities in my English classroom.	-	-	2	2.7	6	8.1	28	37.8	38	51.4
Item 12 - I am comfortable with the number of students in my English class.	10	13.5	15	20.3	15	20.3	18	24.3	16	21.6

Note: N: Number of participants; %: Percentage of participants

Source: Data analysis result of the research

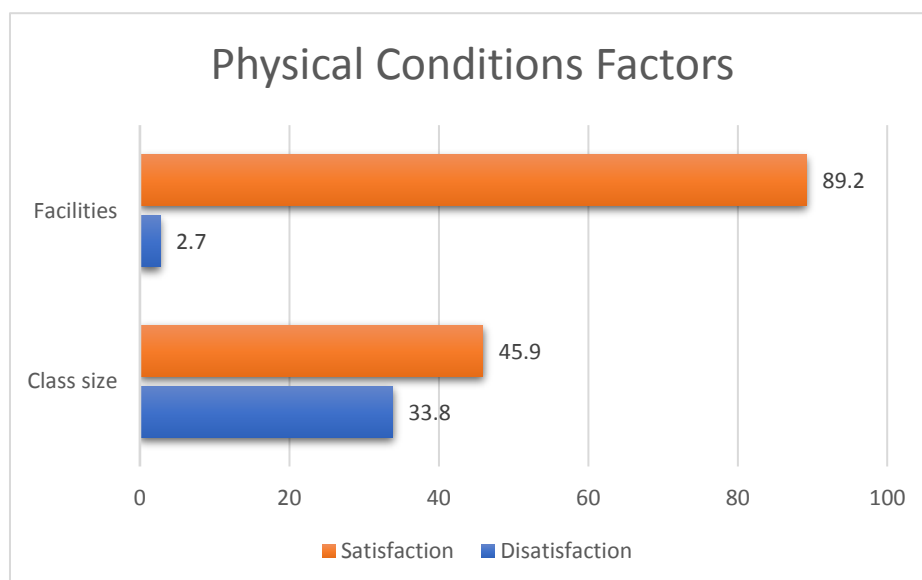


Figure 1. Graphic summary of participants' perception of physical conditions

The responses to the two questions related to the second aspect, the instructional approach, were more satisfying. The learner-centered approach is always incorporated into classrooms, ensuring that students have the time to demonstrate their language ability and discuss their views in pairs or groups. These activities kept the classroom atmosphere lively and positively influenced two-thirds of the students studying the target language. Nonetheless, the element most stimulating to the learners was the manner in which their instructors delivered their presentations. Expressively, as is shown in Figure 2, 85.1 percent of students completely acquired the knowledge through their teachers' instructions. On the other hand, five of the sampled students thought that learning English would be more fun if their teachers played more games in class, especially during the time of writing sessions.

Table 5

Descriptive statistics of participants' perception of teaching methods

Statements	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Item 19 - The atmosphere in my English class is positive.	-	-	8	10.8	17	23	29	39.2	20	27
Item 14 - My English teachers' instructions are comprehensible.	-	-	3	4.1	8	10.8	28	37.8	35	47.3

Note: N: Number of participants; %: Percentage of participants

Source: Data analysis result of the research

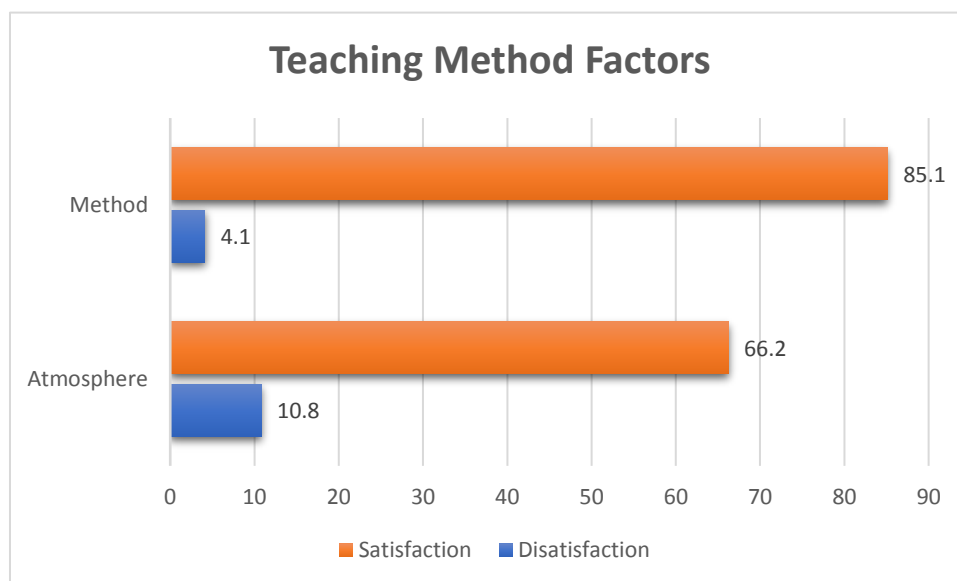


Figure 2. Graphic summary of participants' perception of teaching methods

As Stipek (1988) once said, "to a very large degree, students expect to learn if their teachers expect them to learn" (p. 209); the teacher is the most critical factor in motivating students to engage in language learning among the four variables investigated. Indeed, teachers can get their students involved in lessons through a variety of devices, including their communicative abilities, personal characteristics, knowledge mastery, and professional passion. Figure 3 illustrates that over 85 percent of students placed their trust in their teachers' professional knowledge. Similarly, about two-thirds of the samples recognized their teachers' pre-class preparation for each lesson.

The most contentious issue on the list of questions about classroom factors was reward and punishment policies. In these classes, excellent English performers are rewarded with a cute piece of stationery, whereas poor English performers are penalized with a small amount of money. Explicitly, students achieving the top three highest scores in quizzes may get an incentive gift such as a handbook, a pencil, or a bookmark, while students whose scores are under 4 have to put a 10,000 VND note into a piggy bank. The money earned through punishment will be used to fund the little celebration when the course finishes. Although 39 students approved the regulations, 24 students expressed disagreement with their punishment as they considered the punishment scheme to be a cause of pressure. However, the policies were demonstrated to be beneficial from course to course as all students tried harder and were more active in their English learning. As for how dedicated the teachers were, the numbers show that nearly 80% of the students gave them good ratings, which contributed to the success of language learning.

Table 6

Descriptive statistics of participants' perception of teachers

Statements	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Item 11 - I am confident of my English teachers' competence.	-	-	4	5.4	7	9.5	28	37.8	35	47.3
Item 13 - My English teachers are always well-prepared for their lectures.	-	-	6	8.1	12	16.2	39	52.7	17	23
Item 15 - The regulations of reward and punishment in class are reasonable.	6	8.1	18	24.3	11	14.9	17	23	22	29.7
Item 17 - My English teachers are dedicated.	-	-	2	2.7	13	17.6	29	39.2	30	40.5

Note: N: Number of participants; %: Percentage of participants

Source: Data analysis result of the research

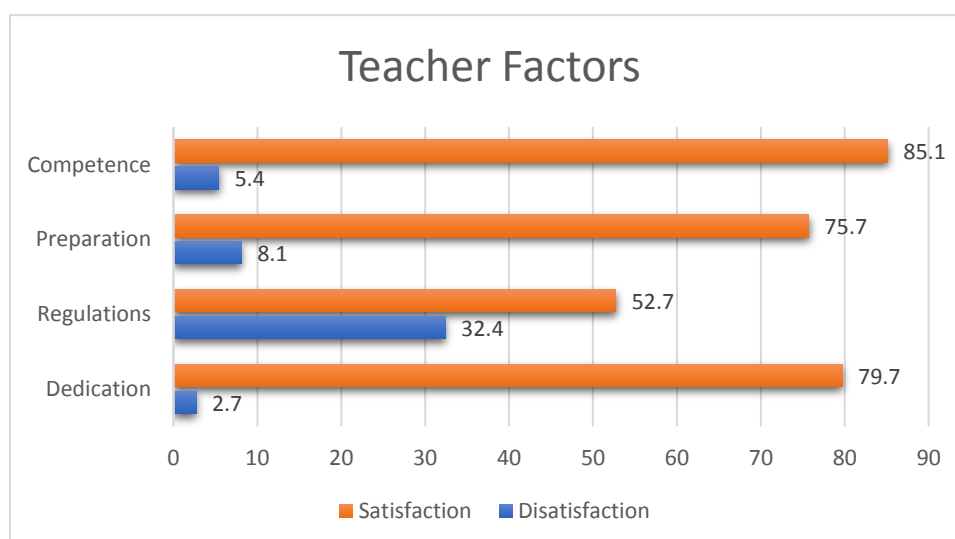


Figure 3. Graphic summary of participants' perception of teachers

The final component, perceptions of success, has the potential to significantly encourage or discourage learners when it comes to language acquisition. The student's perception of their achievement is dominantly influenced by the degree of challenge in both the instructional materials and class activities. Overall, statistics demonstrate a positive attitude of students towards their accomplishments in class. However, twelve students expressed disinterest in participating in class activities, with five stating that the learning objectives were too simple and the others admitting that it was too difficult for them to follow up with the class activities. The textbooks employed in these pre-intermediate classes are Prism 1 and Get Ready for IELTS band 3.5 - 4.5, while students at the intermediate level use the combination of Prism 2 and Complete IELTS band 4 - 5.5. Table 7 shows that about three-quarters of the samples were happy with how they did in class. This is shown by the fact that 55 of the respondents said that their textbooks were neither too hard nor too easy.

Table 7

Descriptive statistics of participants' perception of success

Statements	Strongly Disagree		Disagree		Neutral		Agree		Strongly Agree	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Item 16 - The activities in my English class are interesting.	2	2.7	10	13.5	16	21.6	31	41.9	15	20.3
Item 20 - The learning materials are appropriate for my level of proficiency.	-	-	5	6.8	14	18.9	31	41.9	24	32.4

Note: N: Number of participants; %: Percentage of participants

Source: Data analysis result of the research

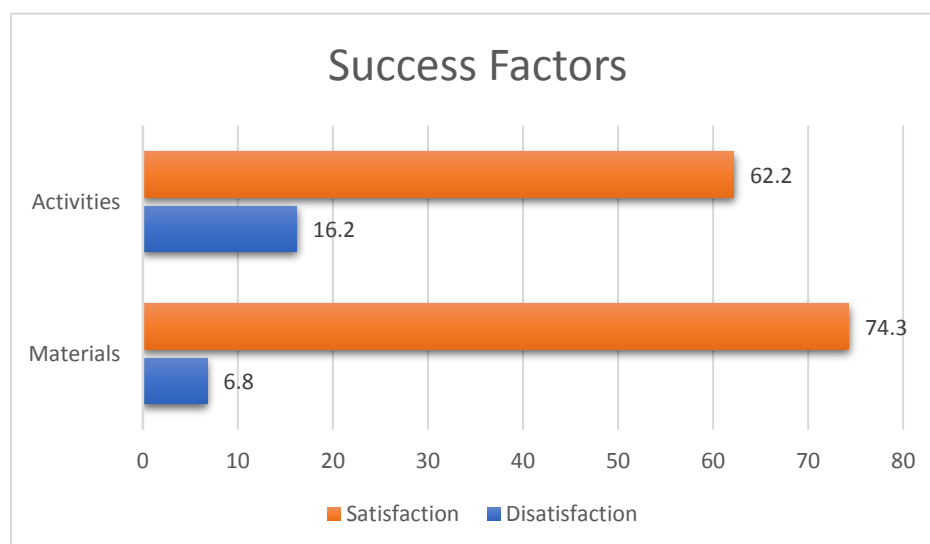


Figure 4. Graphic summary of participants' perception of success

4.2. Discussion and pedagogical implications

The study's findings suggested that participants in the research sample exhibited both correlations and differences in their motivation for English learning. Specifically, the group of undergraduates was highly motivated to study English, which definitely produced a more fruitful preparation for their IELTS test. As Gardner and Lambert (1959) principally associated motivation with the learner's orientation towards the language learning objectives, a high level of motivation

not only yields obviously visible learning purposes and increases cognitive processes but also energizes the learners' self-determination and results in enhanced performance in language learning. Being greatly encouraged to study the target language, learners desire to learn, to try, to work and to persevere throughout the process of language acquisition. Additionally, the subjects in this study were motivated both integratively and instrumentally, but instrumental motivation was more prevalent. In other words, they were primarily concerned with achieving such practical goals as advancing in their future careers, satisfying graduation requirements, or earning the respect of others around them. Delving into English-speakers' beliefs and lifestyles and getting involved in English-speaking communities and cultures received the least consideration when they chose to learn English. Gardner and Lambert (1972) asserted that integrative motivation encourages learners to intensify their efforts in acquiring a foreign language, resulting in a greater commitment and a higher level of competence in the target language. Therefore, apart from providing language skills, EFL teachers are expected to devote considerable effort to fostering the "integrativeness" of their students. They can follow the ten principles in (Dörnyei & Csizér, 1998) "Ten Commandments for Motivating Language Learners" (p. 215), which suggest: (1) setting a role model through the teacher's behaviours; (2) fostering positive rapports with learners; (3) building a relaxing studying environment; (4) making the language classroom interesting; (5) properly presenting tasks; (6) personalizing the teaching and learning process; (7) increasing students' self-confidence in language; (8) boosting students' orientation to the learning objectives; (9) encouraging their learning autonomy; and (10) familiarizing students with the target culture. Practically, it may be advantageous for not only some language centers but also the foreign language faculties in universities to implement ongoing extracurricular language programs or additional activities that involve both learners and faculty members in order to promote interaction, increase exposure, and ultimately enhance their target language proficiency.

The students' perceptions of the characteristics of the classroom were favourable, which may account for a sizable portion of their motivation for enrolling in the IELTS programs. They were not only comfortable and enthusiastic about learning English but also satisfied with the teachers and the instructional approaches. Regarding the physical conditions of the classroom, EFL teachers have limited control due to administrative constraints from the institutions. However, teachers can go along with the learners' motivation or at least be aware of it well enough to prevent problems (Cook, 2000). Indeed, as a key factor in the classroom has the power to either strengthen or weaken the student's motivation for learning, teachers should make every effort to heighten their motivation and bring it to its full potential in the language classroom. Initially, instructors focus on enhancing their professional competence in order to boost their students' language confidence and become dependable teachers as well. Moreover, teachers set themselves as role models with their own demeanor, which is essential for increasing students' motivation in the language classroom. Being friendly and outgoing can also help teachers build good relationships with their students, make the classroom a pleasant place to learn, and keep language classes interesting, which is a great way to get students involved in the lesson.

The statistics also detected a wide disagreement among participants over the policy of reward and punishment in the English classroom. Those two extrinsic motivational factors are naturally two sides of the same coin, as they cause both advantages and drawbacks in learning motivation. Psychologically, rewards create interest and enthusiasm in learning a language, but "they encourage the wrong attitude, and they are extrinsic in motivating the pupil toward winning a prize instead of cultivating a taste for the thing itself" (Seven, 2020, p. 07). In the same way, punishments are also more effective when they serve as a form of discipline and appear as natural outcomes of objectionable behaviour. However, they can cause negative emotions, and they might be powerless if the students are no longer afraid or willing to face the unfavourable outcomes of

their actions. Therefore, rewards and punishments should be wisely implemented by teachers to advance the learning process, enhance learning effectiveness, and improve students' academic performance as well.

Teaching methodology is one of the key aspects investigated in this research. Owing to being increasingly encouraged in education, a learner-centered approach has been entirely employed in all classes at this language center. As the role of the teacher in learner-centered classrooms was proven to be undeniable in Tudor (1993), it is the responsibility of the instructors to determine the most effective ways to motivate students to learn English. Some of the following strategies to stimulate students' English learning can be recommended. The first one is expanding the amount of time students verbally perform the target language in class. In the past, due to the powerful influence of Confucian philosophy from China on national education, Vietnamese students used to be regarded as Confucian Heritage Culture students (Le, 1999). To be more specific, they learned by "rote" rather than by understanding and considered the teacher as the sole source of knowledge (Robertson, Line, Jones, & Thomas, 2000). Moreover, they were passive and did not participate in class activities (Ballard & Clanchy, 1994; Rose & Kaye, 1998). In those teacher-centered classrooms, the teachers constantly spoke, while students remained silent and assiduously took notes on the lecture. However, along with the rapid educational reform during the last decade, a learner-centred approach has been widely implemented in classrooms. Teachers play the role of mere instructors, and students' talk time in class is expected to be significantly greater than teachers' speaking. As discussed in "How to increase student talk time in the ESL classroom" (Concordia University, 2019), in-class activities should be conducted in pairs or in groups to provide students with more precious chances to practice and learn from their peers. In addition, asking open-ended questions and avoiding excessive explanations are also advisable strategies to attain the reward of improved student interaction. Fostering students' autonomy is the second suggestion. Dafei's (2007) findings concluded a highly interrelated relationship between learner autonomy and language proficiency, which can be interpreted as meaning that the more autonomous the students become, the higher the language proficiency they acquire. Students will learn more fruitfully when they are enabled to take personal responsibility for the tasks they are expected to complete. The greater the freedom students have in controlling their learning, the better they perform in dealing with tasks in the classroom. Therefore, the predominant role in the teaching-learning procedure should be played by students. Only in a dynamic classroom that is learner-centred can students practice the foreign language and make progress. The final technique should be employing inductive teaching approach. Brown (2007) affirmed that an inductive method is more applicable in most educational contexts as it is more consistent with natural language learning, more efficiently conforms to the notion of interlanguage development, allows learners to develop a communicative "feeling" for some elements of language, and enhances a more intrinsic orientation by encouraging students to discover knowledge themselves instead of being informed about them. Indeed, it has been believed that presenting conclusions before examples robs students of the excitement of discovery. Teachers should present some examples and then ask students to interpret them, generalize from them, and draw their own conclusions. By starting with examples, evidence, stories, etc., and arriving at conclusions later, teachers can maintain students' interest, boost their motivation, and teach them analysis and synthesis skills.

It is certain that the level of motivation correlates with the level of success, which is the last classroom factor influencing the motivation of students in learning a language. In order for students to succeed, teachers should tailor the activity levels to the students' abilities. For instance, teachers should strive to ensure that the learning tasks presented to students are neither too difficult nor too basic, and they should also break down learning steps into manageable chunks and assign relevant and meaningful assignments that are directly related to what has been taught. As regards

the wide range of responses to the question of success among students, there are numerous reasons for this distinction, including personalities and individual progress rates. However, the placement test should have more discrimination power in order to ensure that students are placed in courses of the appropriate level. Consequently, the materials will be more applicable to a greater proportion of the learners, and the teaching and learning process will be more productive and entertaining.

5. Conclusions and recommendations

This study was conducted with the aim of shedding light on the level and nature of motivation among students from several universities in Ho Chi Minh City. Some underlying motivation factors in the classroom, including physical conditions, teaching method, teacher, and academic success, which affected the degree of learning motivation among the group of samples, were also inspected. The paper provided some theoretical background knowledge so that the readers could conveniently keep track of the research structure. Data collection was conducted through a questionnaire survey, which gave sufficient data to be statistically analysed. The study findings provided useful knowledge and information for the institute to improve their English courses and to stimulate their students' English learning. Despite being encouraged to participate in IELTS preparation courses on a more instrumental basis, 74 participants in this mini-research indicated the coexistence of integrative and instrumental orientations in English learning. Indeed, this combination increases motivation, resulting in constructive behaviours, tenacious efforts, and exceptional achievement. Additionally, this research recognized students' positive attitudes about classroom aspects that contribute significantly to their learning orientation. Because motivation plays such a significant influencing factor in the success of language educational activities, additional studies should be undertaken with bigger sample sizes and in broader contexts. Given the strong correlation between classroom variables and willingness to learn, the research provides the institute and the course designer with valuable information and feedback to enhance their English courses. Broadly speaking, language centers and university faculties should seriously consider surveying learners to ascertain their degree of satisfaction. Even though the study's data source may not be representative of all students, the researcher is confident that the results will be representative and of great value to the relevant authorities and other researchers.

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