

THE CORRELATION BETWEEN ENGLISH LEARNERS' MOTIVATION AND THEIR ENGLISH PROFICIENCY

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Abstract

This study tried to find out the correlation between motivation and English proficiency of EFL learners. The sample consisted of two hundred and six students of the fourth semester of Law Faculty of Sriwijaya University. This study used correlational study. The instruments to collect the data were questionnaire of English learning motivation and TOEFL Test. The result showed that: 1) there was no significant correlation between students' motivation and their English since the significant level (sig. 0.071) was higher than 0.05, 2), students' motivation did not contribute significantly to their English proficiency, the contribution was only 0.2% because the students had different motivation to join English classes. The results of this study can be used by lecturers, learners of English, and other concerned parties to concern more about motivation in relation to English proficiency.

Keywords: english learners, motivation, language proficiency.

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Introduction

English is an international language which had many features in daily life. Almost every element in daily life uses English for business, trading, social life, and many others. Brown (2007) defines the language is acquired by all people in much the same way; language and language learning both have universal characteristics (p. 5). In addition, English is also as the primary language of several countries (including Australia, Canada, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States), and a second language in a number of multilingual countries (including India, Singapore, and the Philippines).

On the other hand, there is a verge of proficiency level the lecturer needs to have reached in the target language in order to make them teach effectively in English. A lecturer who has not reached this level of proficiency will be more dependent on teaching resources and less likely to be able to engage in improvisational teaching (Richards, 2010). In the result of study on

relationship between English proficiency and academic success in international postgraduate education conducted by Vinke & Jochems (1993), they revealed that the improvement of English proficiency to a certain extent might increase the possibility of being academically successful. In their study, they made use of TOEFL score as the representation of English proficiency. Nowadays, Test of English as Foreign Language or TOEFL, as one of widely acknowledged version of English proficiency test for non-native users, has been used by not only International educational institution but also by several domestic higher learning institution as well as non educational agencies as a requirement of either admission, recruitment, or exit purpose (Sulistyo, 2009).

The other aspect to think by English lecturers in relation to the improvement of English proficiency is students' motivation. Norris-Holt (2011) defines motivation as the learner's orientation with regard to the goal of learning as a second language,

i.e. English. It plays a vital role in the English proficiency since it is stated that motivation in second language learning influences the learned success. It may happen as motivation makes someone has willing to do something and want to participate in the learning activities. In addition, based on the result of research done by Zayid (2012) about the role of motivation in learning English by Saudi students, motivation was a complex concept that was influenced by innumerable causes. Specifically, the learners when attending classes expected some kinds of relevance that could order to be able to use it for certain specific purposes and to successfully carry out certain tasks, such as reading report (written in English about their country's economy). This relevance created unstoppable motivation, as the learners realized that learning English was a way for them to accomplish tasks that could not be done otherwise if they used their mother tongue.

In contrary, based on the researcher's observation in April 2013, the fourth semester of Law Faculty students tended to have low motivation and high level of frustration of learning English as they had joined English class for 2 years in Sriwijaya University Language Institute. It was described by the data of student's attendance list which showed that most of the students only had 50% of presence. It required special concerns for English lecturers who had high responsibilities to improve the students' English proficiency as the final goal of teaching and learning process. One of the ways is considering the students' motivation in order to treat the students based on their personalities. For this reason, based on all the above description, the writer was interested in conducting the research which discussed the correlation

between English learners' motivation and their English proficiency.

English Learners' Motivation

It is broadly acknowledged that motivation plays a critical role in academic learning in general, and it is particularly true of the sustained process of mastering and L2 (Dornyei, 2005). The relationships between language learning motivation and language proficiency have long attracted researchers' attention. According to the study done by Ghanea et al (2011), it was found that there was a significant relationship between the integrative motivation and instrumental motivation with English proficiency among EFL learners. It was also supported by the study done by Choosri and Intharaksa (2011), they found that the correlation between motivation and their English learning achievement was significantly correlated with each other.

Attitude is in line with motivation. Brown (2007, p. 193) stated that second language learners benefit from positive attitudes and that negative attitude may lead to decreased motivation. Finally, it may come to unsuccessful attainment of proficiency because of the decreased input and interaction. This is the time when the teachers need to play their role well in improving students' attitudes toward English because as Brown (2007, p. 193) continued that the negative attitudes can be changed. Furthermore, Brown (1994, p. 20) defined the motivation as the extent to which somebody makes choices about goals to pursue and effort one will devote to that pursuit.

A review of the existing literature revealed that effective learning requires not only that students possess knowledge of appropriate study strategies, but also substantial motivation to exert these skills to monitor and regulate their learning

(Roeser & Peck, 2009, p. 119). In addition to that, Wolters (2003, p. 189) assumes that student's motivation is generally defined as willingness or desire to exert effort in relation to engagement and persistence. Of the many variables found related to academic achievement, motivation has consistently been identified as one of the strongest predictors (Allen et al, 2008).

Actually, somebody's motivation is unobservable phenomena (Brown, 1994, p. 20). The motivation itself cannot be seen. When somebody tries to reach his/her goal, which is reflected in his/her behavior then it is known whether somebody has high or low motivation. In addition, Edmonson (1999, p. 39) defines motivation from three perspectives: teaching perspective, learner's perspective, and technical interpretation. From the teaching perspective, the learners are assessed according to their willingness to cooperate with the teachers concerned. From the learner's perspective, motivation is a sequence of congenial external conditions, which can, of course, be manipulated. The combination of both perspectives is the meaning of motivation from the technical perspectives which he considers as the professional, academic interpretation.

Brown (2007, p. 170) categorizes motivation into two types, i.e. integrative motivation which refers to the condition when learners wish to integrate themselves within the culture of the second language group, to identify themselves with and become a part of that society; and instrumental motivation which refers to motivation to acquire a language as means for attaining instrumental goals; furthering a career, reading technical material, and so forth.

The Types of Motivation

There are many kinds of L2 motivation that contribute substantially to the learning process. Each individual has his/her own reasons to carry out a given task. For example, some learn a specific skill in order to get some benefits either financially or socially. On the other hand, some prefer to learn in order to get the full of recognition from a given society, to be a part of that society. The most well-known types of motivation are listed below.

a. Integrative Motivation

This type of motivation has been discussed previously in detail in the section related to Gardner's Social-Psychological Theory. According to Gardner and Lambert (1959), integrative motivation has been conceptualized as one's willingness to be like valued members of the language community. Ellis (1994) explained that some learners prefer to learn a particular L2 because they are interested in the people and culture represented by the target language. An example he provides is that of English speaking Canadians learn French due to their interest in French people and their culture.

According to Gardner (1985), integrative motivation consists of three constructs: integrativeness, attitudes towards the learning situation, and motivation. Integrativeness refers to integrative orientation, interest in foreign language and attitudes towards the L2 community. An attitude towards the learning situation refers to attitudes towards the language teacher and the L2 course. The last component of integrative motivation is motivation that means the effort, desire and attitude towards the learning process. Gardner (2001, p. 6) described integrative motivation as a complex of attitudinal, goal-directed and motivational attributes. In other words,

integratively motivated students want to learn the language, have a desire to identify with target language community and have tendency to evaluate the learning situation in a positive way. Gardner and MacIntyre (1991) argued that integratively motivated students are more active in the classroom in learning class and have a great desire to interact with community of the language.

b. Instrumental Motivation

Instrumental motivation refers to the learning L2 for some functional reasons, such as passing exams or getting a prestigious job (Ellis, 1994). Therefore, the interest and focus of the learners in this process is placed too heavily on the expected outcomes of learning process. Gardner and MacIntyre (1991) conducted a study to investigate the effects of integrative motivation and instrumental motivation on the learning of French/English vocabulary. They found that instrumentally motivated students studied longer than students who were not instrumentally motivated. Instrumental motivation, however, works temporarily by providing some incentives that are tied to a specific goal. This makes the learner's motivation diminishes as soon as incentives cease, and this is regarded as the main disadvantage of instrumental motivation, as its influence on the learner's learning process is temporal.

English Proficiency

Proficiency is the examinees' ability in particular area of competency in order to determine the extent to which they can function in a real language situation. Moreover, Richard (1997) assumed that language proficiency is a person's skill in using a language for a specific purpose. In the

same line, Stern (1983, p. 341) added that language proficiency refers to the language ability or ability in language use. It means that the degree of someone's skill in using a language. It is able to be shown as a goal and defined in terms of objectives or standards.

Proficiency ranges from zero to native-like proficiency. The zero is not perfect as the second language learner as speaker of at least one other language, his first language, knows language, and how its function. So, English proficiency can be defined as having or showing a lot of skill in the usage of English. A proficiency test measures a learner's level of language. It can be compared with an achievement test, which evaluates a learner's understanding of specific material, a diagnostic test, which identify areas to work on, and a prognostic test, which tries to predict a learner's ability to complete a course or take an exam. Proficiency tests are uncommon within the classroom but very frequent as the end aim (and motivation) of language learning.

Method of Research

This study used correlational method because it examined the correlation between different variables (Reaves, 1992). The population of the study was the fourth semester Law Faculty students of Sriwijaya University in the academic year 2012/2013 that was still active in Inderalaya campus and took English classes in Sriwijaya University Language Institute. In the total, there were 206 students in the population.

The sample of this study was taken by using total sampling (Sugiyono, 2011) where it involved all of the fourth semester students of the Law Faculty in Sriwijaya University.

In this case, the writer tried to find the correlation between students' motivation and English proficiency of the fourth semester Law Faculty students of Sriwijaya University. Besides, multiple regression analysis was used to find out the contribution of the predictor variable (English motivation) and criterion variable (English proficiency).

Then, the writer collected the data in two ways. Firstly, the writer used a questionnaire in collecting the data for one predictor variable; the questionnaire of students' English Motivation. The student's English proficiency, as the criterion variable, was measured by their TOEFL Like - Test.

Results

Descriptive Analyses

The results showed that the students' mean score for motivation was 106.90 and the standard deviation was 9.602. There were 3 categories of motivation; low, medium, and high. There was none of students classified in low category, 7% students were classified in medium category, and 93% students were classified in high category. Thus, it was assumed that the students' motivation was in high category. It means that the fourth semester Law Faculty students of Sriwijaya University had high motivation of learning English.

In addition, the results also showed that the students' mean score for English proficiency was 389.91 and the standard deviation was 36.225. After the scores were classified, it was found that among 150 students, none of students reached in the range of 600-above and 550-599. It means that none of the fourth semester of Law Faculty students of Sriwijaya University was able to communicate by using English effectively and naturally. The reason might lie in the fact that they were not students majoring in English. However, the fact that they were not exposed with English for four semesters, it really needed attention from the English lecturers. There were 1% students scored in the range of 500-549. There were 4% students scored in the range of 450-499. There were 31% students scored in the range of 400-449. There were 51% students scored in the range of 350-399. There were 19% students scored ≤ 349 . Hence, it was assumed that the students' English proficiency was in the fifth range of TOEFL scores implication. It means that the fourth semester Law Faculty students of Sriwijaya University may only used memorized phrases in emergencies, they were only able to make questions and short statements, and they also had limited communication ability in English. The results were presented in Table 1.

Table 1. The Distribution of Descriptive Statistics of Variables Measured

Variables	Mean	SD	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Motivation	106.90	9.602	Low (25-58)	0	0
			Medium (59-92)	11	7
			High (93-125)	139	93
TOEFL Score	389.91	36.225	600-above	0	0
			550-599	0	0
			500-549	2	1
			450-499	6	4
			400-449	47	31
			350-399	76	51
≤ 349	19	19			

The Correlation between Students’ Motivation and Their English Proficiency

To find out the correlation of students’ English motivation and their English proficiency, Pearson Product Moment Correlation was applied. The following table presents the result of correlation analysis.

Table 2. The Result of Correlation Analysis of Motivation and English Proficiency

Correlation	Motivation and English Proficiency
Pearson Correlation	0.071
Sig. (2-tailed)	0.148
N	150

From Table 2 above, it was found that the correlation between students’ motivation and their English proficiency was 0.071 at significant level 0.148. It means students’ motivation and their English proficiency was not significantly correlated since the p-value (0.071) was higher than

0.05. Both variables were correlated with each other in a very low level of strength.

The Correlation among Sub-Variables of Students’ Motivation (Intrinsic Motivation, Instrumental Motivation) and Their English Proficiency.

From the coefficient correlation, each variable of students’ motivation was not correlated significantly with their English proficiency. The correlation between intrinsic motivation and students’ English proficiency was 0.124 at significant level 0.126. The strength of the correlation of both variables was in very low level of correlation. Besides, the correlation between instrumental motivation and English proficiency was 0.126 at significant level 0.125. The strength of the correlation of both variables was in very low level of correlation. See Table 3 below.

Table 3. The Correlation between Sub variables of Students’ motivation and their English Proficiency

		Intrinsic Motivation	Instrumental Motivation	TOEFL Score
Intrinsic Motivation	Pearson Correlation	1	.416**	.126
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.124
	N	150	150	150
Instrumental Motivation	Pearson Correlation	.416**	1	.125
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.126
	N	150	150	150
TOEFLScore	Pearson Correlation	.126	.125	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.124	.126	
	N	150	150	150

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The Contribution of Students’ Motivation to their English Proficiency

In this study, the multiple regressions were intended to support correlation among variables and to see if the predictor variables determined the

criterion variable. The researcher used Stepwise method in this study. See Table 4 below.

Table 4. The Contribution of Students' Motivation to their English Proficiency

Aspects	R Square	Change Statistics	
		R Square Change	Sig. F. Change
Motivation	0.128	0.002	0.588

Based on statistical calculation, p-value $0.588 > \alpha 0.05$. It means that the students' motivation did not contribute significantly to the students' English proficiency. The R square value showed that the contribution was as much as 0.2 %.

Discussion

From the above result, it was found that students' motivation was categorized in a high motivation. It means that the fourth semester Law Faculty students of Sriwijaya University had high motivation. Quite contrary of the level of students' motivation, motivation itself was not correlated significantly to English proficiency since the coefficient correlation was higher than 0.05. It was also supported by the multiple regression analysis result, motivation only contributed 0.2 % to English proficiency. Even though 93% of the students had a high motivation, there were a lot of possibilities that they were not really serious in answering the questionnaire of motivation.

In addition, they might have another purpose to join English classes in Sriwijaya University Language Institute beside improving their English achievement. From the observation done by the writer, the students had

high level frustration of learning English as they had already joined English for 4 semesters (4 times), they just joined the class, without having an eagerness and clear goals of learning English. They only came to the classroom without joining the teaching and learning process, sitting on the chair, keeping silent, and if the lecturer asked them about the material, they only kept silent, they got confused whether they understood or not. Another motivation of coming to the classroom, it might be the students liked their lecturer because she is beautiful, but actually they did not like the study. This phenomena was different from what Wahyudi (2012) found when he did a research in five D3 Nursing Science Schools in Palembang. The analysis showed that motivation influenced significantly to English proficiency. It would become serious problem faced by the lecturers that students were not able to maximize the use of their motivation in teaching and learning process of English in order to improve their English proficiency. Indeed, the lecturers should motivate the students both instrumental and intrinsic motivation properly to the students to help them achieving the final goals of teaching and learning process.

The consequence of this study was necessary to inform the students with the knowledge of motivation of learning English. The lecturers and the students have to aware that motivation will affect and contribute the improvement of English proficiency.

Conclusion

In conclusion, based on the above explanation, there was no significant correlation between motivation and English proficiency of the fourth semester law faculty students' of Sriwijaya University since the p-value (0.07) was higher than 0.05. Then,

motivation did not contribute significantly to English proficiency of the fourth semester Law Faculty students of Sriwijaya University. Since the students' motivation only contributed 0.2% to their English proficiency. Motivation was not one of the factors to increase their English proficiency. Even though they had high motivation in learning English, it did not affect to their English proficiency.

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