


Chapter 3

Factors Affecting Malaysian Undergraduate Students' Motivation in Improving English Proficiency in Academic Environments

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ABSTRACT

Motivation plays an important role in the achievement of one's goals, whether as a student or as a worker. It is also an integral component in executing tasks. It is essential in pushing and encouraging people to carry out their daily activities. This research will focus on the different aspects of motivation. In Malaysia, English proficiency is an essential tool to gaining employment. It is for this reason that students are trained to have adequate English communication skills. Here, motivation will play a key role in driving them to become fluent English speakers. Although there are multiple types of motivation, this research will mainly focus on two forms: extrinsic motivation and intrinsic motivation. As explained by Kong, intrinsic and extrinsic motivations are two inseparable phenomena that complement each other when it comes to language learning. First extrinsic motivation, which refers to behaviour that is driven by external factors such as colleagues, friends, and family will be a powerful tool in a student's attempt to master the English language. The encouragement provided by a student's loved ones will certainly lift his/ her spirits if he/she falters in his/her efforts. Extrinsic motivation is also present in another form: rewards. Students who mainly rely on this method of extrinsic motivation will require a reward after accomplishing a goal/task, like taking a break or eating a snack. Vice versa to the students with intrinsic

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motivation, these individuals motivate themselves from within through internalised structures. This type of students is anxious to know and study on their own to achieve what they want. They generally do not need other people or other external motivators as long as they have their own inner drive. Furthermore, their inner selves are eager to accomplish their goals and fulfil their wishes. This study is conducted to investigate the factors that affect Malaysian undergraduate students' motivation to learn English in academic environments. It seems that the English fluency, particularly for those who have not built a concrete basic foundation in English, can be considered as one of the major issues in Malaysian education for the last few decades. To improve their grasp of the English language, students need motivation to keep them moving forward. There are various types of factors that affect the students' motivation. This study attempted quantitative research design using an online survey method. There were 306 respondents of Malaysian undergraduate students from four faculties (management, medical, hospitality, and engineering fields) at one of the private universities in Malaysia. The questionnaire was distributed using Google Form. Then, the results were analysed through SPSS software. The results revealed that the Malaysian undergraduate students were indeed affected by their intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. The students were intrinsically motivated by their own selves and extrinsically motivated by their parents, lecturers, friends, and academic environment to improve their proficiency in the English language. As such, the pedagogical implications are discussed.

INTRODUCTION

Motivation plays an important role in the achievement of one's goals, whether as a student or as a worker. It is essential in pushing and encouraging people to carry on with their daily activities. However, different individuals have different motivations that impact them. Different ages have different ways of receiving motivation and levels of motivation. Therefore, in the context of this research, the focus will be on motivation.

In Malaysia, learning English is compulsory. English proficiency will greatly benefit one's chance in getting a job. It is for this reason that students are trained to have adequate English speaking skills. So, these students need motivation that pushes them to learn the English Language.

The purpose of doing this study is to know the factors that stimulate students to learn English Language. There are many factors affecting students' motivation in learning the English Language. Some students are able to learn for their own sake, and do not expect or need other people to motivate them. Such groups are considered to be intrinsic motivation. Meanwhile there are also students who require the support and motivation of the people around them. They require rewards or stimulation from their external environment after doing their tasks or learning something new as an incentive. This group of students relies on extrinsic motivation.

English is increasingly becoming a global language, mainly due to globalization. Just like any other foreign language, learning English is not always an easy task for non-native English speakers (Sheorey, 2006). Learning with motivation will help the students in gaining the knowledge they need.

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