



## STUDENTS' MOTIVATION IN ENHANCING ENGLISH COMMUNICATION PROFICIENCY IN DONG NAI TECHNOLOGY UNIVERSITY, VIETNAM

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### Abstract:

The study was conducted with the aim of finding out some main determinants related to the students' speaking performance, not to eliminate them fast because that is impossible, at the present time, how to learn and encourage them gradually to solve the problems. The researcher believes that, when the students are clearly aware of the problems that they are encountering, they will be more positive in coping with them and improve them unconsciously. The descriptive method of research was utilized in this study to gather the necessary data and information. The independent variables are students' motivation including their: achievement, competence motivation, power motivation, attitude motivation and incentive motivation. And the dependent variables of the students' speaking proficiency include their: grammatical competence, strategic competence, discourse competence and sociolinguistic competence. The dependent variable focuses on English proficiency: accuracy and fluency. The respondents of the study were 30 English major students from Faculty of Foreign Languages and 6 teachers who were teaching English there, Dong Nai Technology University (DNTU).

**Keywords:** descriptive method; dependent variables; DNTU; independent variables

### 1. Introduction

English has played an important role in every field of society such as: medicine, business, hotel, restaurant, education, science, and technology which means English is used in every field. In Vietnam, Vietnamese students always have to face many difficulties in speaking English even though they are good at English theoretical exercises. The study was conducted with the aim of finding out some main determinants relate to the students'

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speaking performance, not to eliminate them fast because that is impossible, at the present time, how to learn and encourage them to motivate students to improve their English-speaking proficiency. The researcher believes that, when the students are clearly aware of the problems that they are encountering, they will be more positive in coping with them and improve them unconsciously.

## 2. Literature Review

Motivation depends on real-life communication so the learner is able to create an effective learning environment and social interaction. If it is accepted that learning is claimed to be dependent on certain types of interpersonal and social interaction, it follows that circumstances that make these forms of interaction desirable or at least congenial become a necessary prerequisite of effective learning.

Motivation is defined as a person's degree of willingness to act toward a goal (University of Kentucky, 2006) and can be categorized into two types: intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation refers to a person's internal thought processes like curiosity, achievement, and truth. Goals focus on improving understanding and increasing knowledge. Extrinsic motivation refers to external rewards like bonuses, promotions, and recognition. Rewards focus on the physical world and material things that can be seen and touched.

Mcclelland [1] states that those with a high need for power work best when they're in charge. Because they enjoy competition, they do well with goal-oriented projects or tasks. They may also be very effective in [negotiations](#) or in situations in which another party must be convinced of an idea or goal. He also believes that 'power truly is the great motivator'. His studies have related to positions of employment and power motivation, but the theory still applies. Power motivation is about those who are in first, or more so, how and why they strive to get in first. Whatever ones 'power drug of choice', everyone has an inherent desire to feel the power of achievement. So how can one get to the finish line first? How does one reap the rewards and enjoy our success? Power motivation may assist individuals in getting there. Power motivation may be the answer.

[Attitude](#) motivation is about how people think and feel. *"It is their self-confidence, their belief in themselves, their attitude to life – be it positive or negative. It is how they feel about the future and how they react to the past,"* says Richard Denny [2]. Everyone wants to make money, but the things that are really important to people are not monetary. Every person needs to know that they are important and "they matter". People wish to be treated well, feel valued and respected, be proud of the place they work, and get satisfaction from what they're contributing. It is about thinking about how can one motivate and inspire people by valuing them and recognizing their contribution if one wishes to see the amazing value of just making someone feel important and loved.

The Incentive Theory of Motivation as defined by Weiner, B. [3] alternatively called the Reward Motivation Theory, offers the belief that [motivation](#) is largely fuelled by the prospect of an external reward or incentive. An incentive is therefore an object or

an event present in the environment that encourages an individual to perform an action in the absence of any apparent physiological need. This incentive may be a material object such as money, or an intangible one such as positive reception from a significant person. In addition, what is necessary is for the reward to be given after the performance of an action or a behaviour with the specific intention of eliciting the repeated performance of the same behaviour. The timing of the provision of the reward has been found to influence the likelihood of the behavior occurring again. Considerable proof has been gathered showing that rewards that are given immediately after the performance of the desired behavior are more effective than rewards given in a delayed manner.

According to the study conducted by Nasser [4], motivation and attitude provide primary impetus to initiate learning language 2 (hereafter L2) and later the driving force to sustain the long and often tedious learning process. Lack of attention to these factors can lead to inefficiencies in learning L2. The research question lying behind this study is: Is there any effective and efficient relationship between language learning and motivation and attitude? This article intends to achieve a main purpose: to provide an overview of recent advances in research on motivation and attitude to learn L2. It provides some implications for better language learning too. In this paper authors have concentrated on descriptive and analytical approaches in order to clarify the role of attitude and motivation in language learning. Authors have achieved practical and tangible findings and have clarified that designing and implementation of various techniques can change student's attitude positively toward L2 learning. Systematic and academic application of "motivation and attitude" issues in language learning classes is very important and can make language courses more interesting.

In a recent Carnegie report, "[Motivation Matters: How New Research Can Help Teachers Boost Student Engagement](#)," McKay [5] look at the new psychological and behavioural research focused on building motivation—how students respond to incentives to learn, how they see themselves as learners, and what they consider to be their place in school. As the report shows, educators can fortify the non-instructional side of student success in three essential ways: encouraging positive behaviours by offering rewards and emphasizing the value of students' work, improving their academic mind sets, and enhancing their sense of connectedness with their teachers and their peers

An additional problem with rewards, says Hulleman [6], a research associate professor at the University of Virginia, is that they offer the teacher an "out" —they allow him to disregard his role in making a lesson more meaningful. A better motivation-booster, says Hulleman and other experts, is to focus on the value of the task. This requires educators to provide meaningful activities explicitly connected to things students care about. For example, in a 2009 study, Hulleman assigned over 250 high schoolers to two groups; one group regularly wrote summaries of the science material they were learning in class, and the other wrote about the usefulness of this material to their lives. In this latter group, students who had started with low expectations of their success in the course reported a higher interest in science and higher grades in the course than similar students in the group that only wrote summaries.

Extrinsic rewards can produce results, particularly if they are unexpected, prize mastery of skills over absolute performance, or encourage identifiable behaviors rather than outcomes. But getting students to see the value in their schoolwork by connecting concepts to their lives may be a more effective way for teachers to boost student engagement.

### **3. Material and Methods**

#### **3.1 Research Design**

With the aim to improve the students' English communication, we have to study some theoretical methodologies, we have two research methods that are collected data: questionnaires and observation. The first step which is used to collect the data is questionnaires. Besides the subjects for questionnaire, we also observed some English classes of the co-teacher in DNTU. Moreover, the information was noted in the data to prove the using of group work in other classes.

#### **3.2 Participants**

The respondents of the study were thirty English major students from Faculty of Foreign Languages and 6 teachers who were teaching English at Dong Nai University of Technology (DNTU). The respondents were the major in English in Faculty of Foreign Languages in DNTU where English is also compulsory subject for non-major students. These students were studying the second semester of English with the class of English A2 (communicative English class). These students consisted of twenty-two females and eight males who were 19 years of age and over 19. These students had learnt English for 7 to 9 years before. Hence, they were not of the same English proficiency. Some of them were good at English but the others were not. The six teachers teaching English for first-year students who were from Faculty of Foreign Language in DNTU, were asked to participate in the survey questionnaire for the teachers. Among them, there were two males and four females. Their ages ranged from 25 to 31. Five of them had master degree of TESOL, another one was studying post-graduate at Ho Chi Minh City Open University.

#### **3.3 Data Collection Instruments**

##### **a. Questionnaires**

The survey questionnaire is one of the advantage instruments for collecting data in social science in general, in TESOL in particular. The survey questionnaire was used as main instrument in gathering the data. Two parts of questionnaires were designed to investigate students and teachers' opinion about using group work for teaching speaking skill to the first-year students at Dong Nai University of Technology.

## b. Class Room Observations

Almost all students came with some motivations and good attitude. Students make the class more interesting and enjoyable. They showed that a length class of 3 periods in a day (one period is 45 minutes) make it useful if the teacher can help class interesting. The different types of motivations and attitudes can take away the monotony of the students. Also, they claim that they can pay more attention to the lesson, attend class on time and join to the class activities. Analysis of questionnaires.

### 3.4 The students' Type of Motivation

First in rank was the indicator on the students' focus on using English for class assignments and exams to level up their English proficiency ( $gm=4.20$ ); the students were determined to study English to achieve maximum proficiency ( $gm=4.18$ ) and to obtain high ratings in class ( $gm=4.17$ ). These items were verbally interpreted as *high*. The students were motivated to a *moderately high* extent to earn a university degree and find a good job in the future ( $gm=3.38$ ) and be able to read not only English textbooks in their university study but also other English texts as newspapers or magazines ( $gm=2.60$ ).

The overall grouped median of 3.70 indicated that the students' achievement motivation was high. The standard deviations that ranged from .730 to 1.003 suggests that students have almost the same level of achievement motivation.

## 4. Results and Discussion

Students with high achievement motivation strive to increase performance in every task. They make every effort to sustain the level of excellence in all activities and focus on tasks to achieve their pre-set goals. The students believed that learning the English language would lead to better career opportunities.

**Table 1:** Extent of Students' Achievement Motivation

| Indicators  | Grouped Median | Standard Deviation | Rank | Remarks         |
|---|----------------|--------------------|------|-----------------|
| 1. I would like to obtain very high rating in classroom activities  | 4.17           | 0.730              | 3    | High            |
| 2. I focus on using English for class assignments and exams to level up my English proficiency  | 4.20           | 0.907              | 1    | High            |
| 3. I am highly interested in reading not only English textbooks in my university study, but also other English texts e.g newspapers, magazines. | 2.60           | 0.968              | 5    | Moderately High |

The extent of students' achievement motivation is shown in Table 2.

The students had *moderately high* motivation to learn English to make them educated individuals ( $gm=3.44$ ), to be proficient in the English language to achieve better things in life ( $gm=3.43$ ), and gain knowledge and skill ( $gm=2.58$ ). On the other hand, the

students had *low* competence motivation in terms of communicating personal opinions and thoughts ( $gm=2.40$ ) and grasping ideas from another person during conversation ( $gm=2.38$ ).

**Table 2:** Extent of Students' Competence Motivation

| Indicators   | Grouped Median | Standard Deviation | Rank | Remarks                |
|--|----------------|--------------------|------|------------------------|
| 1. I can easily grasp the idea of another person during conversation   | 2.38           | 1.003              | 5    | Low                    |
| 2. I do quote from textbooks in addition to my personal opinions and thoughts when I communicate myself when speaking or writing in class. | 2.40           | 0.758              | 4    | Low                    |
| 3. I believe that learning English is important for making me a knowledgeable and skillful person.   | 2.58           | 0.817              | 3    | Moderately High        |
| 4. Learning English is significant for making me an educated person.   | 3.44           | 0.776              | 1    | Moderately High        |
| 5. Being proficient in English can lead to more success and achievements in life.  | 3.43           | 0.938              | 2    | Moderately High        |
| <b>Overall Grouped Median</b>  | <b>2.93</b>    |                    |      | <b>Moderately High</b> |

The overall grouped median of 2.93 indicates that the students' competence motivation was *moderately high*. The standard deviations indicate that the students had almost similar perceptions on the level of their competence motivation.

Students with high competence motivation communicate their feelings and thoughts; they choose a communication behavior that is both appropriate and effective in a given situation. In learning the English language, the students believed that they can become more knowledgeable and skilful and achieve more success in life.

Another type of motivation, in the study, is the power motivation. The extent of students' power motivation is presented in Table 3.

The students believed in the power to influence other people once they learn to speak English well ( $gm=4.44$ ), as they can discuss interesting topics with people from different national backgrounds ( $gm=4.21$ ).

The students' power motivation was *high* in terms of their ability to better understand and appreciate the ways of life of native and non-native English speakers ( $gm=4.20$ ) and to keep in touch with foreign acquaintances ( $gm=4.13$ ). However, the students had *low* level of power motivation to be proficient in English so that other people would respect them ( $gm=2.86$ ).

**Table 3: Extent of Students' Power Motivation**

| Indicators  | Grouped Median | Standard Deviation | Rank | Remarks         |
|---|----------------|--------------------|------|-----------------|
| 1. Being proficient in English makes other people respect me.   | 2.86           | 1.062              | 5    | Moderately High |
| 2. If I can speak English well, I can express myself better to influence other people to believe in what I say                | 4.44           | 0.675              | 1    | High            |
| 3. Studying English enables me to better understand and appreciate the ways of life of native and nonnative English speakers. | 4.20           | 0.699              | 3    | High            |
| 4. Studying English enables me to keep in touch with foreign acquaintances.   | 4.13           | 0.712              | 4    | High            |
| 5. Studying English enables me to discuss interesting topics in English with the people from other national backgrounds.      | 4.21           | 0.699              | 2    | High            |
| <b>Overall Grouped Median</b>   | <b>4.11</b>    |                    |      | <b>High</b>     |

The overall grouped median of 4.11 shows that the students' power motivation was *high*. The standard deviations signify that the students had almost similar perceptions on their extent of power motivation.

Students do their best to learn and speak the English language to gain recognition and respect from other people. They think that if they can speak the language well, they can communicate better with foreign acquaintances and appreciate their ways of life, too. The extent of students' attitude motivation is shown in Table 4.

The students perceived that studying English helps them to be open-minded and sociable like the English-speaking people ( $gm=4.33$ ) and enable them to behave like native English speakers ( $gm=4.04$ ). These items got a verbal interpretation of *high*. The students had *moderately high* motivation as to the transfer of their knowledge to other people in a positive manner ( $gm=2.86$ ). With *low* ratings were the items on appreciation of English arts and literature ( $gm=2.30$ ) and active participation in academic, social, and professional activities ( $gm=2.13$ ).

**Table 4: Extent of Students' Attitude Motivation**

| Indicators  | Grouped Median | Standard Deviation | Rank | Remarks         |
|---|----------------|--------------------|------|-----------------|
| 1. Studying English enables me to transfer my knowledge to other people in a positive manner.           | 2.86           | 0.887              | 3    | Moderately High |
| 2. Studying English enables me to participate actively in academic, social, and professional activities | 2.13           | 0.712              | 5    | Low             |
| 3. Studying English enables me to behave like native English speakers                                   | 4.04           | 0.718              | 2    | High            |
| 4. Studying English enables me to appreciate English arts and literature.                               | 2.30           | 0.640              | 4    | Low             |

|  |             |       |   |                        |
|--|-------------|-------|---|------------------------|
| 5. Studying English helps me to be an open-minded, and sociable person like English speaking people. | 4.33        | 0.651 | 1 | High                   |
| <b>Overall Grouped Median</b>  | <b>2.85</b> |       |   | <b>Moderately High</b> |

The overall grouped median of 2.85 indicates that the students had moderately high attitude motivation. The standard deviations that ranged from 0.640 to 0.887 disclose that the students had almost similar perceptions on their level of attitude motivation.

The students believed that they have better predisposition to respond positively or negatively to different situations once they learned to speak English well. They were motivated to study English so that they may be able to socialize with English speaking people. Reacting positively or negatively toward idea, object, person or situation happens spontaneously among individuals with high level of attitude motivation.

**Table 5:** Composite Table on the Extent of Students' Motivation

| Motivation  | Grouped Median | Rank | Remarks         |
|-------------|----------------|------|-----------------|
| Achievement | 3.70           | 2    | High            |
| Competence  | 2.93           | 3    | Moderately High |
| Power       | 4.11           | 1    | High            |
| Attitude    | 2.85           | 4    | Moderately High |

Table 5 summarizes the extent of students' motivation. The students had *high* level of power and achievement motivation and moderately high level of competence and attitude motivation. The students had the desire to improve their capabilities in speaking the English language; they do this to be at par with foreign acquaintances as well as to create an impact on other people. The students also aspire to develop their ability to adapt to a given situation and use appropriate communication behavior appropriate to each situation. They wanted to learn the English language so that they may be able to respond effectively to ideas, objects, persons, or situations.

## 5. Discussion

The findings of the study cover the type of students' motivation as to achievement, competence, power, and attitude motivation. The students' speaking competence includes grammatical, strategic, discourse, and socio-linguistic competence.

### 5.1 Students' Type of Motivation

In terms of achievement, the students focus on using English for class assignments and exams to level up their English proficiency ( $gm=4.20$ ); they were determined to study English to achieve maximum proficiency ( $gm=4.18$ ) and to obtain high ratings in class ( $gm=4.17$ ). The students were motivated to earn a university degree and find a good job



in the future ( $gm=3.38$ ) and be able to read not only English textbooks in their university study but also other English texts as newspapers or magazines ( $gm=2.60$ ).

In terms of competence motivation, the students were motivated to learn English to make them educated individuals ( $gm=3.44$ ), to achieve better things in life ( $gm=3.43$ ), and gain knowledge and skill ( $gm=2.58$ ). The students had low competence motivation in terms of communicating personal opinions and thoughts ( $gm=2.40$ ) and grasping ideas from another person during conversation ( $gm=2.38$ ).

With regard to power motivation, the students believed in the power to influence other people once they learn to speak English well ( $gm=4.44$ ), as they can discuss interesting topics with people from different national backgrounds ( $gm=4.21$ ). The students will better understand and appreciate the ways of life of native and non-native English speakers ( $gm=4.20$ ) and to keep in touch with foreign acquaintances ( $gm=4.13$ ). However, the students had *low* level of power motivation to be proficient in English so that other people would respect them ( $gm=2.86$ ).

In terms of attitude motivation, the students perceived that studying English helps them to be open-minded and sociable like the English-speaking people ( $gm=4.33$ ) and enable them to behave like native English speakers ( $gm=4.04$ ). The students were motivated to transfer their knowledge to other people in a positive manner ( $gm=2.86$ ). The students had low motivation in the appreciation of English arts and literature ( $gm=2.30$ ) and participation in academic, social, and professional activities ( $gm=2.13$ ).

## 6. Conclusion and Recommendations

The following conclusions were drawn from the findings of the study.

Students with high achievement motivation strive to achieve maximum proficiency. Students with high competence motivation choose a communication behaviour that is both appropriate and effective in a given situation. Students with high power motivation speak the English language to gain recognition and respect from other people. Students with high attitude motivation have better predisposition to respond positively or negatively to different situations.

The students apply the correct usage of words spoken and showed consistency in the use of verbs while speaking. They know when to end up a conversation and use an approach to understand the whole conversation. They can sustain the verbal interchange of ideas but sometimes ask the help of others to clarify things. They relate effectively with other people especially during social interactions.

The students' achievement motivation is correlated with their grammatical competence, strategic competence, and discourse competence; competence motivation with grammatical competence, strategic competence, and social-linguistic competence; power motivation with strategic competence and socio-linguistic competence; and attitude motivation with strategic and discourse competence. Base on the findings of the study, it is concluded that the hypothesis stating that teacher variables and student

variables have significant relationship to student's speaking proficiency in term of grammatical, strategic, discourse and sociolinguistic features is hereby accepted.

Based on the conclusions, the researcher put forward the following recommendations:

- 1) In as much as the students were not interested in reading, it is suggested that teachers expose students to more reading activities to enhance their competencies. Teachers may provide students with more opportunities to converse among themselves so that they may better grasp the idea of another person. The students may gain self-respect and other people's respect if they will experience interactions in academic, social, and professional activities.
- 2) The teachers may be sent to seminars or trainings to better impart to students the recent trends in English language learning.
- 3) It is highly suggested future researchers conduct a study in similar vein to confirm the findings of the present study. They may include other variables that would measure the speaking proficiency of non-native speakers.

### **Conflict of Interest Statement**

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

### **About the Authors**

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