

FOREIGN LANGUAGES AND VIETNAMESE

**ENGLISH LEARNING MOTIVATION AMONG STUDENTS
AND SOLUTIONS FROM A MOTIVATIONAL
PERSPECTIVE FOR FOREIGN LANGUAGE TRAINING****NGUYEN THANH VAN***

ABSTRACT: This paper presents the results of a survey conducted to identify the motivations of technical and economics students towards learning English. The study sample consisted of 2,000 students from Ho Chi Minh City University of Technology and Education and Ho Chi Minh City College of Industry and Trade. A questionnaire was used for data collection. The findings indicated that instrumental motivation, related to future professional activities, and integrative motivation, linked to current life integration, are crucial for the students. Finally, the author proposes solutions from a motivational perspective to enhance foreign language training activities.

KEY WORDS: motivation; English learning; instrumentality; integrativeness; solutions.

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1. Introduction

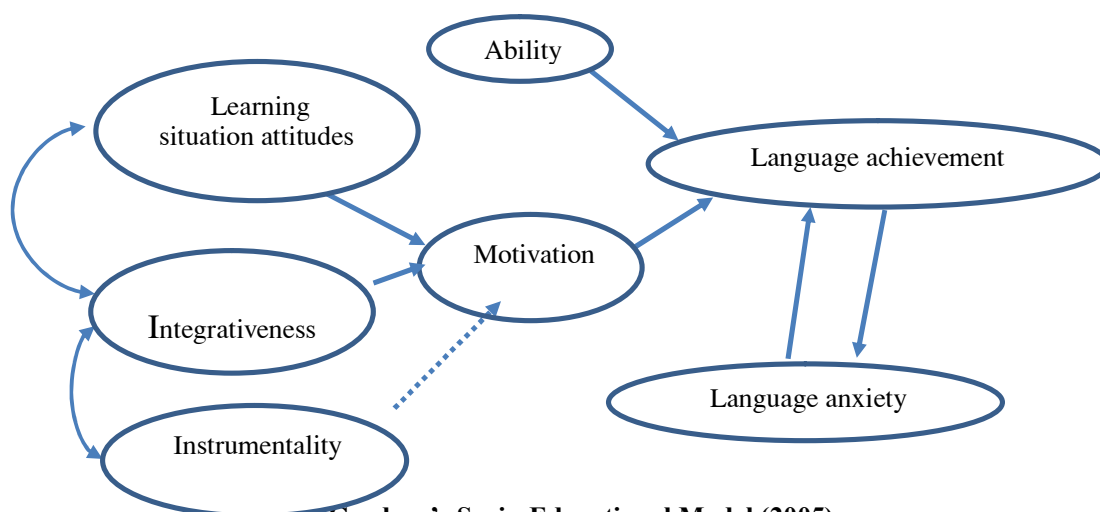
The motivation to learn English is just one component that shapes learners' language attitudes. It is also a factor that sociolinguists particularly focus on when researching language attitudes, as it plays a key role in shaping learners' emotions and behaviors. In this article, we analyze survey results from non-language major students at two institutions: Ho Chi Minh City University of Technology and Education and Ho Chi Minh City College of Industry and Trade, focusing on the reality of learners' motivation for learning English. From this analysis, we propose solutions from a narrower and deeper perspective based on motivational factors.

2. Literature Review

Canadian social psychologists, Lambert and Gardner (1972), conducted the first experimental study when examining the role of motivation in learning English. This study was conducted in a bilingual context, and the results of this research introduced the Socio-Educational Model of language acquisition in the classroom environment, which has since been modified several times (Gardner, 1985; Gardner & MacIntyre, 1993; Gardner & Tremblay, 1995; Gardner, 2000). According to this approach, social psychology and individual psychology need to be integrated to describe the motivational factors in the success of learning the target language. They identified two types of motivation in language learning: (i) Integrative motivation (having a positive attitude toward the culture and the desire to integrate) and (ii) Instrumental motivation (learning the language for a specific purpose, such as career development or investment in higher education studies). Gardner and Lambert (1972) stated that learners with integrative motivation tend to be more successful in learning a foreign language than those motivated by instrumental reasons.

What was previously referred to as language aptitude in the 1985 and 2000 models was broadened in scope to encompass the ability to learn a language. Additionally, he introduced the factor of anxiety as a moderator of performance, which refers to the heightened response in specific language-related situations that learners encounter. This model was further refined and updated by Gardner in 2005, restructuring the components of motivation into three factors: a positive attitude toward the learning environment, integrativeness, and instrumentality.

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Gardner's Socio-Educational Model (2005)

According to Gardner's 2005 Socio-Educational Model, foreign language learning motivation is comprised of one of three factors: (1) Learning a foreign language as a tool to achieve personal goals (instrumental motivation); (2) Learning a foreign language due to the desire to integrate into the native-speaking community or a language community outside the classroom (integrative motivation); (3) Learning a foreign language due to a positive attitude toward the learning environment. These factors are interconnected through continuous and discontinuous lines, representing the different roles of personal identity factors that influence the language acquisition environment, thereby shaping learning outcomes.

3. Research method

To examine the reality of English learning motivation among university students, we conducted a survey of 2,000 non-language major students, from first to fourth year, at Ho Chi Minh City University of Technology and Education and Ho Chi Minh City College of Industry and Trade (both technical and economic faculties). The student questionnaire consisted of 31 questions organized on a Likert scale. The questionnaire was completed by students during class and collected by us immediately after they finished. Basic information about the student sample is presented in the table below.

Characteristics	Students	%
<i>1. Gender</i>		
Male	937	46.9
Female	1063	53.1
<i>2. Field of study</i>		
Economics	1051	52.6
Engineering	949	47.4
<i>3. Place of origin</i>		
Rural	1385	69.3
Urban	615	30.7
<i>4. Start of English learning</i>		
Kindergarten	14	0.7
Primary school	658	32.9
Secondary school	1282	64.1
High school	35	1.8
Technical school/University	11	0.5

The data shows that, in this sample, there are 937 male students, accounting for 46.9%, and 1,063 female students, accounting for 53.1%. The percentage of female students is 6.3% higher than that of male students. The writer made an effort to achieve gender balance in order to ensure that the findings are objective and comprehensive. The survey results also indicate no significant differences between two genders regarding the content of the survey, nor were there notable differences in motivation despite the categorization by field of study between the engineering and economics faculties.

Regarding place of origin, the survey shows that most students come from rural areas, accounting for 69.3%, equivalent to 1,385 students, while only 30.7% come from urban areas. Typically, students from urban areas have earlier exposure to foreign languages compared to those from rural areas. This allows students from urban areas to adapt more quickly to innovations in foreign language teaching and assessment. In the following section, we will present the quantitative analysis of the information obtained from the structured questionnaire on the current state of students' motivation for learning English.

To evaluate the motivation for learning English among non-English majored students in relation to their satisfaction with their current English learning outcomes, we followed the following procedure: 1) Test the reliability of the scale to identify variables that fit the model; 2) Conduct factor analysis to extract factors that align with the model; 3) Use multiple linear regression analysis to determine the instrumental motivation, integrative motivation, and attitudes toward the learning environment of non-English majors.

The results of the reliability test using Cronbach's Alpha for the groups of variables-instrumental motivation, integrative motivation, and attitudes toward the learning environment-show that 8 variables were retained for the instrumental motivation factor group, 7 variables for the integrative motivation factor group, and 5 variables for the attitudes toward the learning environment group. These variables all had acceptable item-total correlation coefficients (≥ 0.3). The Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was ≥ 0.6 , meeting the reliability requirements.

4. The findings

Based on the response rates of the surveyed group, we will identify the prominent motivations in order to provide insights and recommendations that contribute to enhancing students' learning motivation.

4.1. English learning motivation among students

Researchers have various ways of classifying learning motivations. We chose to analyze according to Gardner's classification perspective, as presented in literature review, to clarify the results we obtained from our survey. In his educational model, Gardner categorized motivations into three groups: instrumental motivation, integrative motivation, and motivation stemming from attitudes toward the learning environment.

The first two types of motivation serve as the foundation for shaping attitudes toward foreign language learning before learners begin their studies and remain present throughout and even after the learning process. Meanwhile, motivation related to classroom factors only arises once learners engage in foreign language learning activities. It plays a role in fostering and sustaining pre-existing attitudes and can also give rise to new forms of attitudes.

Based on the response rates of the surveyed group, we arranged and reorganized the research results in order of the proportion of motivation types, from highest to lowest, as follows:

Table 4.1. Reasons for learning English

Motivation	Reasons	Student	%
Instrumental	To earn money, to get a job	1842	92.5
	To succeed in career	1645	82.6
	To graduate	1610	80.8
	For Entertainment	1202	60.3

	Compulsory subject	1053	52.9
	To get a higher score on exams	867	43.5
	To study abroad	773	38.8
	To apply for a scholarship	625	31.4
Integrative	English is a global language	1572	78.9
	To communicate with native speakers	1407	70.6
	For travel	1388	69.7%
	To stay updated with global information	1077	54.1%
	To participate in extracurricular activities inside and outside school	759	38.1%
	My friends are learning, so I learn too	439	22.0%
Attitude towards Environment	Learning environment	803	40.3%
	Family	734	36.8%
	Friends	660	33.1%
	An inspiring teacher	656	32.9%
	Interesting learning materials	491	24.6%
	Other reasons	115	5.8%

The findings clearly show that instrumental motivations (which allow learners to achieve language proficiency for practical reasons such as career opportunities, job requirements, and academic needs) are the most prominent factors, overshadowing other types of motivations in influencing students' English learning. It is believed that integrative motivations (learning English out of interest in the people and culture associated with the language, and the desire to integrate into the community of speakers) play a greater role in shaping attitudes and achieving success in acquiring a foreign language. However, the survey revealed that students' strongest motivations comes from instrumental ones.

Overall, based on the results in Table 4.1, the writer categorized the motivations into three levels:

4.1.1. High-level motivations (70% and above): Students are motivated to learn English for reasons such as earning money and getting a job, career success, graduation, English as a global language, and communication with native speakers.

The most common motivations making students learn English are instrumental motivations. Students clearly understand that they are learning English as a foreign language for future goals closely tied to their personal and professional lives. In this case, the language functions as a tool they use to achieve their career objectives. These are both short-term goals, such as the immediate need to meet graduation requirements (with 80.8% of respondents selecting this reason), and long-term goals, with 92.5% choosing reasons like "earning money" or "career success." This can be classified as a pragmatic type of instrumental motivation. Learners with this motivation are particularly interested in the practical utility of English, especially its ability to produce material benefits, rather than their attitudes or feelings toward the language or its associated culture.

Students recognize the social demands for future skills necessary to secure the best job opportunities. The survey results reflect the current language policies and the national context, where English has become increasingly integrated into all aspects of life, making it impossible for students to ignore this skill in their future plans. As such, the instrumental motivation among surveyed students is quite clear and is influenced by both language policies and the current English language situation in practice. The continuous encouragement of English language policies and the

multilingual environment in Vietnam, where English remains the dominant foreign language, strongly shape this motivation.

Generally, this type of motivation is very stable throughout the learning process and is typically maintained at least until students achieve their future goals, such as obtaining a degree, securing a desired job, or achieving career success. From the pragmatic nature of this motivation, we observe that its impact on learners' attitudes and language achievements can be twofold. On the positive side, since English is seen as directly tied to students' future benefits, it provides a powerful, personal motivation to learn the language, which can enhance learning effectiveness and produce results in a short time. Students can achieve language success without necessarily liking or being passionate about the language; in fact, even if they don't like the language, they may still achieve certain results.

On the negative side, although this motivation is stable within the classroom, it is not long-lasting and can easily diminish outside the classroom once the learners have achieved their goals related to English. This can lead to a superficial approach to learning, where students study just to pass or graduate, rather than to use the language. Furthermore, since these goals are not self-driven, but rather imposed by external requirements, students may lack an active, positive learning attitude in class. While they may participate seriously and fulfill their obligations, they do so with a sense of compulsion, which can dampen the enthusiasm for both learning and teaching. This often results in a return to traditional classroom dynamics, where the teacher merely transmits knowledge, and the students passively absorb it, leading to reduced educational effectiveness.

In this high-level motivation group, two integrative motivations also stand out: "communication with native speakers," chosen by 70.6% of students, and "English as a global language," selected by 78.9%. The concepts of globalization and global citizenship are increasingly prominent in modern society. The need for integration and the principle of interconnectedness are present in all areas of life, particularly in science, driving students to engage with language as a tool. Students have a desire and enthusiasm for real-life experiences connected to the foreign language they are learning, and they view this as a motivating factor. While this type of motivation may not be as strong as instrumental motivation, it is more enduring and originates from the learners' own initiative—an internal emotional drive. Therefore, educators should encourage students to sustain and further develop this type of motivation.

4.1.2. Moderate-level motivations (30% to 70%): These motivations include traveling, studying abroad, staying updated with global information, a required subject, applying for scholarships, achieving high test scores, learning environment, family, friends, participation in extracurricular activities inside and outside school, inspiring teachers, and entertainment.

This group reflects a mix of various motivations from all three categories: integrative motivations (such as traveling, studying abroad, staying updated with global information, participating in extracurricular activities inside and outside of school, and entertainment), instrumental motivations (mandatory courses, applying for scholarships, and wanting high exam scores), and attitudes toward the learning environment (inspirational teachers, learning environment, and friends).

The integrative motivations in this group indicate that students' desire to learn a foreign language often stems from their personal interests or needs. For instance, some students intend to study abroad either during or after their university studies and thus need to accumulate sufficient English proficiency. Others have a desire to explore and travel to places outside of their home country, so they require the necessary language skills to support that. Some are interested in foreign entertainment media that use English, while others want to join clubs or groups where English is the primary language of communication.

The motivations related to attitude toward the learning environment also appear in this medium group, showing a positive shift when students recognize that an inspirational teacher or friends make their English learning experience more enjoyable and motivating. This type of motivation typically

arises after the learner has already started studying English. While not highly selected among the survey respondents, it still plays a crucial role in shaping students' attitudes and behavior toward learning. If factors within this motivation-teachers, learning environments, friends-are effectively leveraged to inspire students, it can significantly boost their foreign language learning efforts, reinforce existing motivations, or help transform previously negative learning attitudes. Conversely, even strong existing motivations can be undermined or diminished if the teacher or classroom environment negatively impacts the learner's experience.

4.1.3. *Low-level motivations (below 30%)*: These include interesting learning materials, learning because friends are learning, and other reasons.

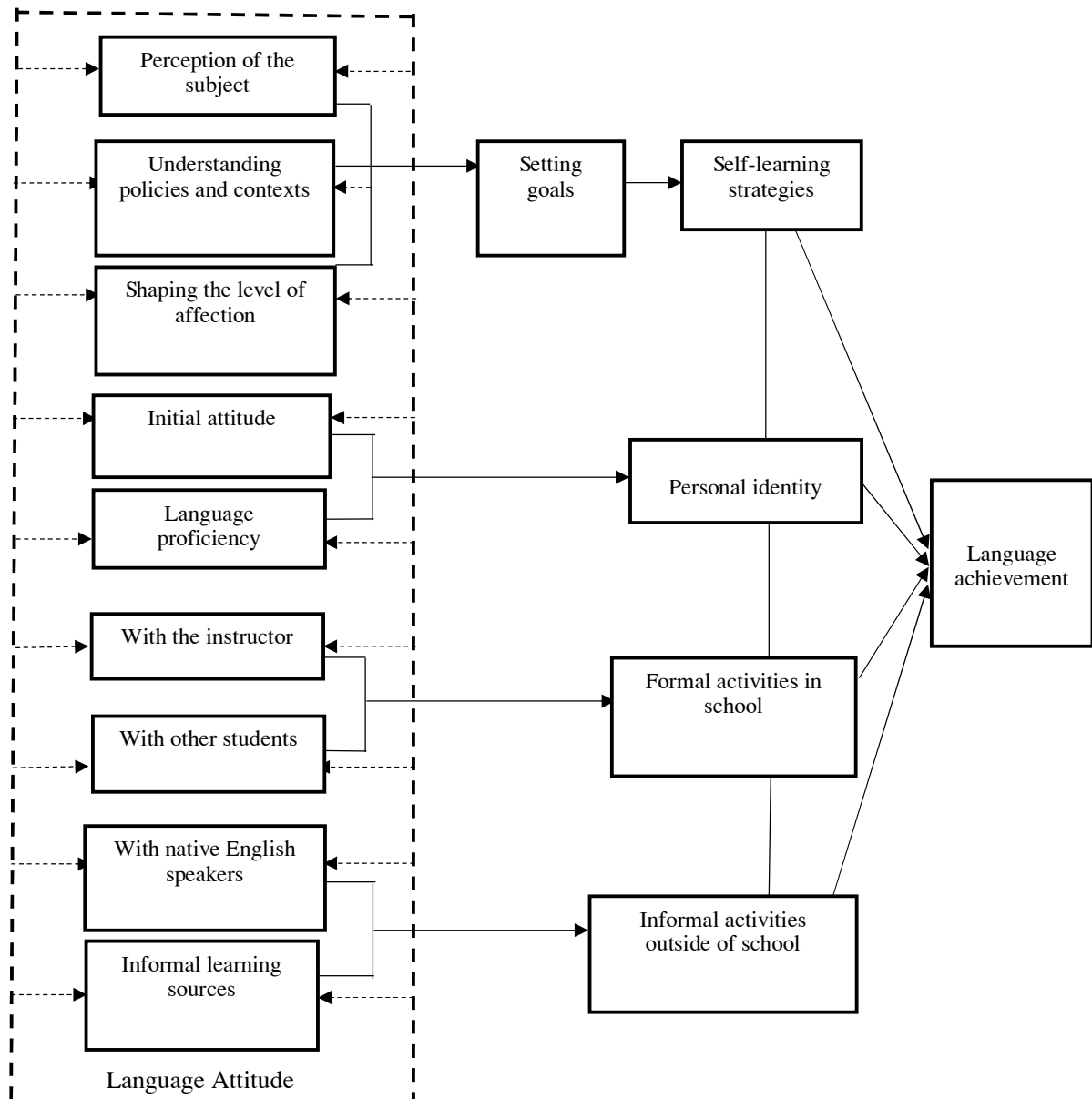
Only 24.6% of students expressed an interest in the course materials, 22% learned English because their friends were doing so, and 5.8% cited other reasons beyond those listed by the research group. This shows that the primary motivations in this group are mainly related to the learning environment. In other words, these factors have the least influence on students' motivation when it comes to learning a foreign language. This percentage also indicates that improving or leveraging these factors will not significantly change the overall system of motivations but will only provide slight reinforcement or diminish small aspects of learners' existing attitudes.

The findings also reveal that students tend to value the role of the classroom teacher more than the "silent teacher"-the textbook. The impact of textbooks and learning materials on students' attitudes toward language learning is not as significant, either positively or negatively. Furthermore, the influence of peer groups is also not a major factor in shaping students' language-learning motivations. This suggests that adult learners have already developed stable internal motivations and language attitudes, which are more influenced by the importance of the language itself rather than external social pressures from peer groups.

From these three motivation groups, it is clear that there is a distinct separation between different types of motivations. Certain motivations, especially instrumental ones, have a fundamental influence on learners' language attitudes. However, learners' understanding of the role of language as a tool for future life is often hypothetical, based more on imagination than on real-world experiences. Therefore, the role of the teacher at this stage is crucial in gradually providing real-world experiences to students to further enhance their instrumental motivation. The survey results show that: 1) regardless of the type of motivation, even those that learners consider less important, if nurtured, can become a driving force and enhance learning outcomes; 2) initial motivation, no matter how important, will stagnate or be extinguished if the teaching model does not focus on it, and can even negatively impact learning outcomes; 3) all types of motivation, whether long-term or short-term, are important for learning.

Additionally, the presence of low-impact motivations related to course materials, textbooks, and peers should not be overlooked in language education. Optimizing these lower-level motivations can play an important role in fostering a positive learning attitude toward foreign languages within the classroom environment, contributing to the development of a more positive overall attitude toward the language being studied.

Gardner's educational model (2005), as we analyzed in literature, suggests that language achievement is significantly influenced by two factors: motivation and language learning ability, and is also affected by anxiety in language learning. Based on some fundamental factors of this sociopsychological model, along with the survey results on factors affecting achievement, the writer proposes the following model for language teaching:



4.2. Solutions from a motivational perspective to enhance foreign language training

The solutions we propose are based on the survey results, closely linked to the motivational groups as analyzed above.

4.2.1. Maintaining and developing attitudes based on existing motivations

This does not mean that teachers need to lecture about the necessity of English in the present or future during their lessons. Pure theory only wastes class time without bringing long-term effectiveness. The key factor is the classroom training activities designed to maintain, encourage, and realize students' motivations to learn English. Specifically:

- Realize learners' language expectations by teaching content connected to their professional practice. If only general conversational English is taught, then classroom training activities are no different from those at other language centers. The difference, and what highlights the irreplaceable role of foreign language training within the student's current learning environment, lies in the integration of two factors: foreign language knowledge and professional expertise. Learners will view English as one of the connecting channels to acquire specialized knowledge, and in turn, their accumulated professional knowledge will make them see English not just as a foreign language, but as a powerful instrumental motivation they must pursue for both present and future goals.

- Language teaching activities that are connected to highly relevant motivational groups must reflect the integration of teaching and the teacher's own knowledge. Foreign language instructors must have professional knowledge relevant to the learners' field of study. This is an inevitable trend in foreign language education at the university level, aimed at high-quality international integration. It also highlights the irreplaceable role of language training in universities compared to external language centers. We cannot demand a strict output standard or require students to use English in professional communication if the teachers themselves are not proficient in those fields.

- Realize a language-learning environment through the presence of native-speaking instructors. There should be cooperation and exchange between native-speaking teachers and local teachers. The role of native-speaking teachers goes beyond providing standard language knowledge; they serve as a bridge that helps transform students' positive language attitudes into natural linguistic behaviors in practice. They stimulate interest in using the language in real-life situations, while also helping to avoid the feelings of awkwardness, hesitation, and lack of confidence when students use the foreign language outside of classroom environments.

- It should also be added that among the existing motivations of the surveyed group, there are instrumental motivations that are compulsory due to language policies, such as learning to graduate or to score well on exams. These are "coping" motivations, where learners are temporarily dealing with English to achieve a certain related goal, rather than for long-term benefits. These motivations typically do not foster a positive learning attitude or drive results that meet societal demands. Instead, they yield limited results, meeting only the minimum standards of a narrow English policy, such as in the university setting. Other instrumental motivations, such as those related to global learning and career opportunities, should still be maintained and encouraged for development. Survey results show that learners view English not only as a foreign language subject but also as a tool language. English must be taught and learned, and it must be used to acquire knowledge and assess learners. Learners must be driven by the need to deeply engage with the international professional world and be compelled to use this tool language. This will inevitably foster a positive attitude and increase their motivation to learn English. To achieve this, teachers must develop learning policies that help students transform their instrumental motivations into intrinsic needs, with these needs becoming increasingly connected to their learning efforts.

4.2.2. Forming a positive attitude based on developing new motivations

New motivations, as we understand in this article, are those that students do not yet have, are present at low levels, or are missing or weak factors that students are not satisfied with and are not actively engaging in. Of course, it is unrealistic to idealize that all motivations must be prominent. However, examining why certain motivations are less prominent, understanding their role in influencing attitudes and outcomes, and finding solutions for these issues are tasks that researchers need to clarify. Survey results showed that only 37.2% agreed with the statement "I enjoy activities related to English," while the majority of respondents either did not express a clear attitude or disagreed.

We found that although students have existing awareness and positive attitudes, their behaviors do not reflect these attitudes. Therefore, while the policies of teachers in the classroom are important, they are not sufficient. The picture of motivation driving learning would be more complete with the active participation in meaningful English environments, created through the collaboration of schools, student organizations, faculty, and the students themselves. Activities related to English should go beyond

academic content and club activities to include interpersonal and intergroup interactions, similar to the model pyramid proposed by researchers MacIntyre, Clement, Dornyei, and Noels [5]. This is because confidence in English as a foreign language (FL) truly manifests when learners participate in intergroup and interpersonal activities, living in intergroup environments to develop genuine communicative motivation.

To be truly effective, these English environments must be designed and developed based on the needs and desires of the students themselves, allowing them to live in a relatively authentic and useful English environment. There is no need to focus excessively on British or American English standards, as our survey results show that 71.5% of respondents are concerned with standard British or American English.

To make language learning outcomes more practical, should the assessment of learners' abilities be changed to become more diverse and flexible? The purpose of teaching English at universities is to learn in order to work, to use, and to apply it in real-world professional contexts. Therefore, in order to meet students' reasonable demands for an English practice environment, training activities should collaborate with students to design practical, applied learning environments tailored for specific groups of learners. At the same time, these practical environments should be used as one of the criteria for assessing students. A variety of well-organized, engaging extracurricular activities will help shape and develop positive attitudes towards English in learners who initially have weak or nonexistent attitudes and motivations. Additionally, the requirement to participate through English policies tied to learning outcome criteria will compel students to take responsibility and put effort into these communal activities, thereby fostering more positive behaviors in learning. Extracurricular activities are also an effective way to promote interpersonal and intergroup interactions, which are very characteristic of the social interactions involved in learning and using a foreign language.

It is important to recognize that learners, particularly young people aged 18-20, are a dynamic age group with a well-defined sense of self and clear direction in their aesthetic and cultural needs. They tend to align their practical activities with their personal desires, preferences, and tastes. Therefore, in order to promote a positive attitude towards English, training activities must take into account these cultural and aesthetic needs. Specifically, beyond the encouragement of instrumental motivations, it is necessary to combine this with giving learners the experience of learning as a gateway to topics and subjects they are interested in. For example, through learning activities, teachers can introduce and encourage students to explore issues that students care about globally, valuable specialized resources in English that students need, literary works, films, meaningful English clubs, etc. Integrating these into lessons is essential for fostering the mindset that learning English is not just an ordinary subject but an enriching foreign language experience. It allows learners to keep up with topics of interest in their lives. In other words, learning what they need to for future professional standards and learning what they want to should be considered in parallel. It should not solely be about teaching what the instructor wants to teach without considering the learners' practical needs.

5. Conclusion

The solutions we propose are not meant to be universal for all learners or to perfect every language skill. Rather, they are based on survey results regarding learner motivation. These solutions emphasize the importance of the psychological and emotional aspects of learners as they engage with and acquire a foreign language. Our goal is not for learners to excel in all areas, listening, speaking, reading, and writing but to develop positive attitudes toward learning, such as proper awareness, an affection for the language, enthusiasm, and self-confidence throughout the language acquisition process, while also sustaining motivation for the future.

Motivational teaching is not a new concept globally, but it is relatively new in Vietnam. This approach must be grounded in an understanding of the current context and directed toward comprehensive foreign language education, closely tied to learners' future professions. These considerations have been carefully weighed in our proposed solutions.

As the author of this article and a foreign language instructor for specialized students, my aim is to inspire students' autonomy in learning by fostering and sustaining factors that promote positive attitudes toward language learning. As Leonardo da Vinci once said, "Every action must be motivated by a reason." In addition to imparting knowledge, the teacher must also serve as a companion who ignites their learners' passion. In this way, the ultimate goals learners achieve will certainly surpass the boundaries set by the classroom.

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Động cơ học tiếng Anh của sinh viên và giải pháp dưới góc độ động cơ cho các hoạt động đào tạo ngoại ngữ

Tóm tắt: Bài viết là sự nhận diện động cơ học tiếng Anh của 2000 sinh viên không chuyên ngữ thuộc khối ngành Kỹ thuật và Kinh tế của hai Trường Đại học Sư phạm Kỹ thuật TP.HCM và Trường Cao đẳng Công thương TP.HCM. Tác giả đã sử dụng bảng hỏi để thu thập dữ liệu. Kết quả khảo sát cho thấy người học của cả hai khối ngành coi trọng nhất những động cơ công cụ liên quan đến hoạt động nghề nghiệp trong tương lai và những động cơ thâm nhập với mong muốn hoà nhập vào thực tiễn đời sống hiện đại. Từ thực trạng động cơ, tác giả đề xuất giải pháp liên quan đến hoạt động đánh giá và giảng dạy gắn kết với động cơ của người học.

Từ khóa: động cơ; học tiếng Anh; động cơ công cụ; động cơ thâm nhập; giải pháp.