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Study on Students' Motivation in Joining An English Course

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Abstract

This study was investigated the students' motivation in joining an English course. The samples were 70 the first year students of English course at the Souksavath College, Vientiane of Laos. Data was collected using questionnaire, measuring motivation for applying to learning EFL. Data analysis was use R program Version 2.15.0, in order to calculate the percentages, arithmetic mean, and standard deviation. The results showed that the students' motivation which considered from factor of personal reasons section in applying to study English as Foreign Language (EFL) indicated that the arithmetic mean is in high level including the items such as students want to study English because of financial benefits and widely used, increase oneself knowledge study, and for educational development in higher education in the next future; teachers' competence and teaching styles, at the college was also a positive motivation for students applying to study English course, stated that students were appreciated with English curriculum, lesson contents, and teachers intent to all students; college facilities motivate students to make a big decision to take the English course including with the classrooms size and stage, duration of the study, and transportation.

Keywords: *applying for studying EFL Course, motivation, aspect*

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Introduction

Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR) is located in indo-china peninsula between latitude 14-23 degrees north and longitude 100-180 degrees east. It connects border with China to the North, Cambodia to the South, Vietnam to the East, Thailand to the West and Myanmar to the Northwest. Lao PDR has total population around 6.8 million people 2009 and Lao language is the national and official language, while English is a foreign language as well as French (Laos, 2009). Since Laos was offered independence by American colony in 1975 to 1980s, English was in used with limitation in many areas in Lao PDR. However, from 1980s to 1996, the English language increasingly became importance language as a foreign language in Laos because the development of the country received a huge power of official improvement assistance from many international organizations (Sundgren, 2008). In 1994, opening doors of the country to the world, Lao government put emphasized on development of English language in order to be important communicational tool (Sullivan & Schatz, 2009).

Nowadays, English language is required to be studied in public and private schools, colleges and universities even though in other organizations in Laos particularly in the capital, central of provinces throughout the country. in other hand, English is one of compulsory subjects in the public schools. It must be started from the first year of lower secondary until upper secondary educational levels. Lao students learn English under structured syllabus which offered by the Ministry of Education, particularly from the National English resources centre. However, the English syllabus at universities, college levels in both public and private are not standardized, because each university and/or college has their different set of requirement (Anson & Lau, 2003). In addition, the English teaching and curriculum designed had been criticized for ignoring the learners' needs, because each college designed its own English course and choose its own textbooks and teaching aids, for example some colleges improved unique English program for business, technical terms and so forth (Chia at al., 1999).

Souksavath College is located in the central of Vientiane capital, Laos. It's one of other private colleges in Laos which is managed by a private sector yet it is under controlled by the private Department of the Ministry of Education. In this college has offered many fields of studies, one of them is English programme. For the academic year 2010, there were some 70 students enrolled in the first year of English language programme. This English program was taken place in the evening session.

However, recently, Lao students gained positive effect of learning English in their study in many areas such as business, finance and banking, science and technology, culture and international relationship (Gömleksiz & Bagherzadeh, 2010). So, Laos, a country that has national interest for learning English and presently experiencing impressive economic, social cultural changes, becomes an ideal place in which to explore the nature of English language learners' motivation and characteristics formation in the state and private colleges (Gu, 2009).

The views of motivation comprises of two processes as external and internal. The internal process contains with purposes, beliefs, perceptions, and expectations as well as influenced by personal, sociocultural factors, and classroom environmental experiences (Dembo, 2004). At the same time, the extrinsic motivation should be generated. When possible in order to make learning full of fun, interesting and rewarding. Both external and internal motivation factors can work together (Wharton & Phil, 1999). If Learners already want to learn, they need to want to study things. According to Rifai (2010) motivation refers to a requirement to study a language because of their specific goals, such as a job, passing an examination as well as it also mentions to a demand of English learning for the communication with people of another culture.

Consequently, motivation is important to students learning English that can be attracted learners of various factors. For instance, many classroom environmental factors effect student motivation such as assignments offered teacher behaviour, and instructional methods (Dembo, 2004). It also still has many techniques can be designed and implemented to motivate the students to learn English, particularly in the private colleges increase gradually. Motivation of Lao students towards English learning play key role in order to enhance a quality English proficiency level. So, we determined to study what is current the level of students' motivation to English subject. Therefore, the objective of this paper was to investigate the level students' motivation toward applying to study English language course at the private college in terms of personal reasons, instructional situation and environments factors.

Motivation and foreign language learning

Motivation can be specified in many ways, yet when referring to teaching and learning it may be defined as students' reasons for doing something, in this study, a reason for applying for learning English. Educators generally mention to motivation as external and internal. Intrinsic motivation is

defined to engage in activities of learners able to appreciate and satisfy to do something whereas extrinsic discusses to actions that can carry out in order to receive achievement. For instance, when students have free to select to act activity, they will pursue interesting situation where they can rise to the challenges that the activity presents (Lai & Conttia, 2007). It may be a personal characteristic such as inquisitiveness, a feature of the situation as a students' enthusiasm, or a goal to be achieved in specific purse, for example in the case of study EFL (Březinová, 2009). It has been considered one of the most important factors affecting L2 learning motivation before the 1990s and more powerful factor than the latter in predicting L2 achievement (Huang, 2006).

Motivation and reasons for learning English are concentrated to make possible factor designing better course syllabus, teaching strategies to encourage students' motivation in learning behaviour (Rifai, 2010). For example, highlights the role of the teacher as a motivator, facilitator to students to get better attitude towards English language learning (Daoud, 1998). In other hand, educational researchers states that teachers should delineate correct learner expectations and motivation about how English language are studied and also giving the reasons outside the classroom methods, in order to decrease any gaps between learners and teachers beliefs (Anson & Lau, 2003). Motivation toward English language learning is important factor in decision of learners to study English as a second language in the context of exploration in the developing country, Laos because second language learning motivation is believed to be one of the most important determinants in L2 learning (Gu, 2009). If the factors are important motivation an influence toward language learning in general, they are of essential significant in teaching/learning academic for four skills (Daoud, 1998).

In the present study, the measurement of cognitive strategies emphasise on the use of meaningful strategies. The result of research showed that students' achievement is positively influenced by the cognitive strategies they employ to guide their learning (Greene at al., 2004). Moreover, Motivational factors that have been consistently involved with cognitive strategy use in learning situation are ones 'selves-efficacy, achievement goals, and perceived instrumentality.

Therefore, motivation toward learning English is one of the main factors to affect the Lao students in application for learning English both public and private institutions to enhance their English knowledge. However, all those motivational factors base on the in both internal and external environment to support students to make their decision to apply in studying English language as a second language. According to Dembo (2004) suggested to the internal factors to students' motivation that it depends on students' goals, beliefs, feelings, and perceptions determine their motivated behaviour and academic performance. For example, if learners value a task and believe they can master it because they more likely to use different learning strategies, try hard, and persist until completion of that work.

Most researchers contribute that motivation is related to students' choice of a particular action, persistence with it, and try to expend on it. The external or behavioural features of motivation conclude decision-making and activity level. The learner decides to select, to pay attention, to support in one activity, but not others. On the other hand, the learner persists over and extended time as well as to maintains high activity level (Manolopoulou-Sergi, 2004; Shedivy, 2004). Students' motivation is a complicated concept; what encourage a teen to achieve may not affect the student to study foreign language learning. According to Elizabeth and Jill McDonald (2009) explained that extrinsic and intrinsic factors that affect motivation vary widely, the following factors appear to influence motivation in learning: relevance, control and choice, challenge, social interaction the chance to work with others, anticipated sense of success, need, novelty and cognitive dissonance or discrepant events. The research showed that a predictor of intrinsic motivation for learning EFL, interest in foreign countries, and instrumental motivation as well as enjoyment is also a positive predictor of intrinsic motivation for learning EFL and interest in foreign countries (Carreira, 2011). Shedivy (2004) stated that a more thorough understanding of learners' motivation could result teachers being able to motivate students more effectively by knowing the components of motivation and conceptualization their interrelationship, capturing motivation as a construction could be augmented with various of strategies with which to push its growth.

Research Methodology

Population

The aim of this study is to investigate the students' motivation in joining an English course. Researchers conducted this study with a quantitative survey method. The population for this study was the first degree students who had studied English language course at Souksavath College in

the evening session of academic year 2010. A type of the sampling technique purposive had been carried out using the whole population of 70 participants in three classes. A questionnaire was employed to measure students' motivation towards applying for learning English. The respondents were 38 males and 32 females by which 54% of them were males and 46% females. The ages were organized from 15-35 years old by which 66% of them were 15-20, 31% were 21-25, 1% was 26-30, and 1% was 31-35 years old. Moreover, 28 of respondents by which 40% were from Vientiane Capital and 42 were from other provinces by which 60%.

Research Instrument

The tool for this study was questionnaire that asked students' feeling and motivation in applying to study English at a private college by referring to the course literature on personal reasons, teachers' competence and teaching styles, and college facilities.

Questionnaire Design

The questionnaire was designed by developing from the literature review that related to the course contents of the motivation in applying for learning English course. The survey of this study was conducted in the form of a two-part questionnaire: Part 1 asks for the demographic data: gender, age, and hometown which conclude in eight questions are tick the appropriate boxes. Part 2 deals with students' motivation in three areas: personal reasons, teachers' competence and teaching styles, and college facilities consist of 30 items and 10 items for each section with five point rating scale.

The questionnaire was written in bilinguals, both in English and Lao in order to be clear and reliable to these Lao English students for whom English is not the first language. And then, this questionnaire was validated by three experts to related field in order to check the content validity (Index of Item-Objective Congruency: IOC) of the rating scales of students' motivation before distribute of the sample.

Data collection procedure

The researchers took the questionnaire to implement the pilot study with other group of students in the different private college. 30 English program students were selected randomly for the purpose of the pilot test. The objective of pilot study is to enhance the questionnaire reliability. The overall reliability index, Cronbach's alpha, obtained was .895 which was considered ideal. After that the questionnaire was administered with the target group with 70 English program students. The administration of the study survey questionnaire was conducted during the first semester of their English classes.

Data analysis

The analyses of the research data were conducted by means of descriptive statistics. The descriptive statistical analyses of percentages of the students' response were employed to report their demographic variables with 8 items and students' motivation with 30 items to calculate mean, and standard deviation. The analyses process used R program Version 2.15.0 to analyse the quantitative data.

Findings

The findings presented the respondents' data in both demographic and motivation towards English learning. The results comprise of the level of interpretation motivation by the respondents in terms of personal reasons, teachers' competence and teaching styles, and college facility factors as below:

From table1: It shows that the numbers of respondents' gender 38 are males by which 54% and females are 32 by which 46%.

Table 1. Participants Sorted by Their Gender

Gender	Number of frequency	Percentage
Male	38	54.28
Female	32	45.71
Total	70	100

From table2: It shows that the number of age of respondents were arranged from 15-35 years old by which 66% of them were 15-20 is high, 31% were 21-25 is moderate, 1% was 26-30, and 1% was 31-35 years old is low.

Table 2. Participants Sorted by Their ages

Ages	Number of Frequency	Percentage
15-20	46	65.71
21-25	22	31.42
26-30	1	1.42
31-35	1	1.42
Total	70	100

From table 3: It shows that the number the respondents 42 are from other provinces by which 60% whilst the other is from Vientiane capital 28 people by which 40%.

Table 3. Participants Sorted by Their hometown

City	Number of frequency	Percentage
Capital	28	40
Provinces	42	60
Total	70	100

Personal reasons factors

From table 4 it shows that almost of the students' feeling in English studies, if we consider with the average table list of the numbers, the first to the last items are 1 very high, 7 high and 2 moderate. The total $\mu = 3.89$ and $\sigma = 0.94$ it indicates that high level of students' personal reasons.

Table 4. The aromatic means standard deviation and the level of interpretation motivation by the respondents' personal reasons

No	Personal reasons:	μ	σ	Level
1	Love and like to study English	4.32	1.09	High
2	Want increase yourself knowledge study	4.47	1.15	High
3	Study English is financial benefits and widely used	3.65	0.84	High
4	To comfort in communication with aboard	4.35	1.10	High
5	To development yourself education in the future	4.52	1.17	Very high
6	Want to use free time being usage	3.91	0.93	High
7	Want to have friend and know many people	2.91	0.64	Moderate
8	Must use English for your work	4.12	1.01	High
9	To participated in social development	3.85	0.91	High
10	Want to be English teacher	2.80	0.62	Moderate
Total		3.89	0.94	High

Teachers' competence and teaching styles Factors

From table 5 it shows that almost of the instruction influence to motivate students toward English learning, if we consider with the average table list of the numbers, the last items are 5 moderate, therefore the rest of list items are high. The total $\mu = 3.47$ and $\sigma = 0.78$ it indicates the average is high.

Table 5. The aromatic means standard deviation and the level of interpretation motivation by the respondents' teachers' competence and teaching styles

No	Teachers' competence and teaching styles	μ	σ	Level
1	Teacher is an foreigner	3.22	0.71	Moderate
2	Teacher used instructional media appropriate	3.42	0.73	Moderate
3	Classroom activities were exited	3.12	0.68	Moderate
4	There was good curriculum	3.75	0.88	High
5	Teacher intent in all students	3.57	0.82	High
6	Lesson contents was you want	3.60	0.82	High
7	Lesson content was your ability	3.68	0.85	High
8	Facility in modern studying	3.42	0.77	Moderate
9	Classroom is friendly	3.71	0.86	Moderate
10	There is out class activity	3.28	0.73	High
Total		3.47	0.78	High

College Facilities

From table 6 it shows that almost environments influence to motivate students toward making decision to study English. If considering with the average table list of the numbers, the first 8 are high and the last 2 items are moderate. The total $\mu = 3.64$ and $\sigma = 1.37$ it indicates high level.

Table 6. The aromatic means standard deviation and the level of interpretation motivation by the respondents' college facilities.

No	Facilities	μ	σ	Level
1	SOUKSAVATH college is suited near home and comfortable for transport.	3.78	0.88	High
2	SOUKSAVATH college is good environment	3.72	0.86	High
3	Classroom is appropriate side and state	3.90	0.93	High
4	There are library and internet for study	3.68	0.85	High
5	There is comfortable car parking	3.48	0.78	Moderate
6	Date and time in study appropriate for students	3.84	0.91	High
7	SOUKSAVATH college is value from society	3.65	0.84	High
8	The canteen is available	3.64	0.84	High
9	There is English curriculum for being able select	3.51	0.79	High
10	The classroom with air conditional	3.28	0.66	Moderate
	Total	3.64	1.37	High

Conclusions

Popular English language learning has always been one of the interest areas in Lao PDR. Every year, the learners increase rapidly from enrolment in both public and private sections. Although English is a foreign language and difficult to study, they try to find out the ways in order to get English knowledge. Many factors can motivate the learners such as occupations, business, further education, and communication with English native-speaks and so forth. So, these motivational factors affect students' learning.

This research paper purposed to investigate the students' motivation in joining an English course in Lao PDR in term of the students' personal reasons, teachers' competence and teaching styles, and the college facilities variables. Gömleksiz (2010) pointed out that learner's motivation in language learning is affected by his or her attitudes towards learning the language.

The results of paper, questionnaire responses still have high motivation to study English language at a private college particularly learners who came from other provinces as shown in the table 3. The gender of responses are male students had higher motivation rather than female up 38 participants by which 54% which can be seen in the table 1. On the other hand, overall of motivation to apply study English language at the private college is also high level in term of their attract that occur from the students' personal reasons themselves, teachers' competence and teaching styles, and the facilities of the college provided.

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