

Motivational predictors of language learning autonomy among ESL secondary school students in Malaysia

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Received: July 7 2013 Accepted: August 19 2013

ABSTRACT

Drawing on self-determination theory (SDT), this study investigated secondary school students' autonomy extent and the motivation orientation for learning English in Malaysia. The aim of this study was to explore the relationship between language learning autonomy and motivation in one of the eastern collectivist context, i.e. Malaysia. Going more in-depth, the relationship between more self-determined and less self-determined forms of motivation and autonomy in Malaysian context were explored. Additionally, by applying regression analysis categories of motivation which can predict language learning autonomy are determined.

KEYWORDS: Autonomy, Motivation, Self-determination theory.

INTRODUCTION

Self-determination theory (SDT), developed by Deci and Ryan (1985), is one of the theories which best describe the necessity of autonomy and motivation in learning. Self-determination is defined as "the process of utilizing one's will", and 'Autonomy', refers to freedom in making a choice and accepting responsibility for one's own learning (Deci & Ryan, 2000).

According to Deci and Ryan's (1985, 1987) SDT, human beings have three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence and relatedness, which together predict motivation. Deci and Ryan (1985) hypothesized that people will challenge, show interest and engagement in activities which they experience them volitionally. Moreover, intrinsically motivated individuals engage in the activity for the sake of its own rather than for other extrinsic motivation purposes.

Even though SDT has inspired many scholars to consider its basic concepts in students' learning, the idea of applying autonomy among eastern societies is still controversial and has aroused many criticisms by cross-cultural psychologists (e.g. DeCapua & Wintergerst, 2004; Markus & Kitayama, 2003; Iyengar & Lepper, 1999). It is alleged that SDT is limited to western societies and is irrelevant to non-western cultures. In fact, it is claimed that eastern students belong to the "collectivist culture", which "promotes interdependence, respect for authority, hierarchical roles and relationships, and group consensus" (DeCapua and Wintergerst, 2004, p. 54) DeCapua and Wintergerst (2004) differentiated the concept of "face" in collectivist and western context. In western context, 'face' is usually accompanied with pride, dignity, honor and self-esteem, whereas in most collectivist cultures, 'face' collocates with "losing" as 'losing face'. Asking too many questions may cause losing face in front of other classmates as it may show having lower proficiency and difficulty to understand teacher's instruction. Moreover, if the teacher does not know the answer to the questions, it may cause an embarrassing situation for the teacher. In fact, in this culture, as DeCapua & Wintergerst (2004) mentioned, asking many questions may be regarded as threats to the authority of the teacher who is believed to be the only one who talks during the whole class, while students are expected to sit quietly and take notes.

In the argument of different cultures and authority of the teacher, Liu (1998) pointed up Asian cultures of obeying the authority unconditionally, in which teacher is regarded as a 'fount of knowledge'. As such, developing autonomy in Asian societies can be demanding for teachers due to the mismatch between students' culture and teacher's instructions especially those Asian students studying in western societies.

Addressing this issue, the goal of the present research is to shed further light to the existing controversy and moreover this research aims to investigate students' extent of autonomy and motivation and further explore the relationship between students' language learning autonomy and language learning motivation.

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Motivation

Research evidence suggests motivation affects students' engagement and their success in academic performance. Legualt, Green- Demers and Pelletier (2006) explained how student motivation decreases by their progress in grades. They mentioned that student amotivation, which is complete lack of engagement; reaches the highest peak at the high school level. As a result, high school teachers may face the problems related to their students' amotivation; while, the sources of amotivation among students are still unclear. As suggested by Johnson (2008), amotivation should not be investigated under 'student problem', but 'teacher problem'. This is the role of teacher to apply innovative instruction to increase student motivation in learning. A self- determined classroom environment where the priority is given to student's choice may lead students to motivation in second language learning (Johnson, 2008).

In their research of the rationale behind amotivation among high school students, Legault et al. (2006) found that skill shortage or lack of confidence in doing a task, bring about despondency over learning and induce lack of motivation and engagement in the activities. Obtaining required skills and abilities in order to achieve a goal by own efforts are reflected in students' autonomy in learning.

Research in the field of second language learning acknowledged that affective and cognitive factors influence learner's success in learning a second language. Until 1960s, research mostly concentrated on the effect of cognitive factors on language learning, but since then researchers attempted to discover how affective factors like motivation and anxiety could inhibit or foster second language learning (Gardner, 1985). Affective factors are defined as "those that deal with emotional reactions and motivations of the learner" (Scovel, 1978, p.131).

Many researchers are congruent in considering the essential role of motivation in academic learning and specifically in language learning (Hurd, 2006; Noels, Clement & Pelletier, 2001; Oxford & Shearin, 1994; Gardner, 1985). Since the 1990s, issues related to motivation in second language (L2) learning and debates on the nature of L2 motivation have gathered momentum among researchers. Gardner's (1985) motivational theory is one of the notable theories in which the relationship between motivation and orientation was mainly emphasized. Gardner (1985) differentiated between motivation and orientation is the desire to learn a language and will be obtained by learner's own efforts, whereas orientation is the reason for learning another language. Gardner (1985) defines L2 motivation as "the combination of effort plus desire to achieve the goal of learning the language plus favorable attitudes toward learning the language." (p. 10). Gardner's (1985) orientations are classified into two categories: *integrative orientation* and *instrumental*, where the former refers to the desire of the learner to learn a language to interact with and identify members of the L2 community, whereas the latter refers to learning L2 to attain an academic goal, receive job advancement, travel and pass the test. Gardner and Lambert (1959, 1972) hypothesized that the integrative orientation would better predict proficiency in language learning compared to the instrumental orientation due to positive attitudes that learners experience.

However, research over this theory suggested limitations in applying this theory in different contexts and societies. Although some researchers (e.g., Gardner & Lambert, 1959) claimed that integrative orientation was a good predictor of other L2 variables; others noticed that instrumental orientation in different contexts can be a better factor in predicting other variables such as achievement (e.g., Lukmani, 1972; Oller, et al. 1977). Lukmani (1972), for instance, tested Marathi-speaking high school students on their English proficiency and the nature of their motivation for learning English. The results of this study revealed that the learners were instrumentally motivated to learn English in which their scores in English proficiency were correlated significantly with their instrumental motivation scores. Therefore, these researches proved that in some contexts both orientations could sustain effort, and even in some contexts, integrative orientation might not motivate some learners to learn second language.

Another limitation for this theory concerns having more orientations besides integrative and instrumental orientations. For instance, Oxford and Shearin (1994) argued that some other orientations in learning a second language can be "wish to learn L2 to be intellectually stimulated" or "to show off to their friends". Other orientations mentioned by researchers can be: the need for achievement and stimulation (Dornyei, 1994), desire to assimilation (Graham, 1985), interest and curiosity (Crookes and Schmidt, 1991), travel, friendship, and knowledge (Clement and Kruidenier, 1983), prestige-influence (Moise, Clement, and Noels, 1990), Identification-influence (Noels and Clement, 1989).

Due to the above-mentioned limitations of Gardner's (1985) motivational theory, researchers considered another prominent theory namely self-determination theory. Deci and Ryan (1985) based on self-determination theory categorized motivation into three types as: intrinsic, extrinsic motivation and amotivation. Further, Vallerand, Blais, Briere & Pelletier, (1989) categorized intrinsic motivation into three types: knowledge, accomplishment and stimulation, and extrinsic motivation into: external regulation, introjected regulation, and identified regulation.

Deci and Ryan (2000) suggested a framework (figure 2) within which motivation categories lie on a continuum from self-determined to non-determined, moving from intrinsic orientation to amotivation. At the least determined

end, at the far left of the model, *amotivation*, refers to the level where learners are neither competence nor have motive in doing actions. Deci and Ryan (1985, 2002) recognized three subcategories of extrinsic motivation, namely: external regulation, introjected regulation, and identified regulation. Extrinsic motivation applies for "actions carried out to achieve some instrumental end, such as earning a reward or avoiding a punishment" (p.39).

External regulation, the most extreme form of extrinsic motivation, refers to the pressure or reward from the environment for doing an action. In educational context, external regulation can be getting good grades at the final examination or passing the university entrance exam. This type of motivation drives the learner to persist learning as long as the external incentive is present. Therefore, once the external incentive is taken away, the individual phases out the engagement in the task. This type of extrinsic motivation is equalized to Gardners's (1985) instrumental orientation.

Next degree on the continuum is *Introjected regulation*, where learners have internalized reasons for learning a target language, such as being a good citizen or feeling ashamed in front of other people who can speak the target language better than them. Although the source of motivation has been shifted to the self of the individual, "taking in but not accepting a regulation as one' own (Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier and Ryan, 1991, p.329), since individual engagement emerged from threatened sanctions or promise rewards (Deci and Ryan, 1991).

Identified regulation, the most self-determined form of extrinsic motivation, refers to learner's personal choice or the received values from the action. Identified-regulated individual engage in an activity by his own desire since they comprehend the value of their learning. Individual do the activities freely "for personal reasons, rather than external pressure" (Deci, et al. 1991, p. 330). This type of extrinsic motivation is not completely, but relatively self-determined, as the motivation is based on the usefulness and instrumentality of the activity.

On the contrary to External motivation, *Intrinsic motivation* as the most self-determined motivation category, is defined as "motivation to engage in an activity because that activity is enjoyable and satisfying to do" (Deci and Ryan, 1985, p. 39). The first type of intrinsic motivation, IM-Knowledge, refers to the awareness stimulated by disclosing new knowledge. In other words, learners learn English merely for the sake of learning a new language. The second type of intrinsic motivation, IM-Accomplishment, associates the feeling with task fulfillment or goal achievement. The third and last category of intrinsic motivation, IM-Stimulation, represents the feeling associated with task contentment and pleasure. When individual chooses an activity by his own decision, he will look for interesting and challenging activities (Noels, Pelletier, Clement and Vallerand. 2000).



Figure 1. Orientation subtypes along the self-determination continuum (adapted from Deci and Ryan, 2000, p. 72).

Deci and Ryan (2000) suggested that an individual who has high level of self-determination is likely to be more autonomous in learning and will consequently have higher engagement and achievement. In spite of that, extrinsic motivation does not suggest having no autonomy. Nunan (1997) indicated that autonomy is not a concept of all-or-nothing, but a concept of degrees. Therefore, extrinsic motivation and its different types do not show lack of self-determination, but show the extent to which they are internalized into the concept (Noels, et al. 2000).

Some researchers claimed that this theory is not applicable for Asian students. Kember et al. (1999) proposed that Deci and Ryan's (1985) Self-determination theory applicability in Asian context depends on students' perception in considering career expectations as informational or controlling factors. Kember et al. (1999) concluded that if extrinsic motivation is considered as informational and providing feedback factors, then it enhances intrinsic motivation, whereas if extrinsic motivation is perceived as controlling factors, then intrinsic motivation will be decreased. Kember et al. justified their findings by refereeing to *Stipek's internalized motivation* (1988) where internalized motivation happens when children learn specific behaviors according to their society values. Kember et al. believed that Hong Kong students have internalized high status well-paid careers as a social value, and consequently this extrinsic motivation make them more intrinsically motivated in their learning. Kember et al. proposed that these findings are applicable to other Asian contexts.

Foroutan et al., 2013

A follow-up research by Thang (2004) in testing Kember et al. (1999)'s results and investigating Malaysian university students' motivational orientation revealed that extrinsic motivation has negative connotation to learning and is accompanied with ineffective approaches. The findings of Thang's study showed extrinsic motivation is correlated to controlling factors and does not lead students towards intrinsic motivation nor increased perception of self-determination or competence.

In the relationship between motivation and autonomy, previous literature has not reached to common conclusion to decide which one: autonomy or motivation comes first. Some researchers believe that autonomy lead students to be more motivated. Dickinson (1995) in the literature review of autonomy and motivation suggested that learners who are active and independently involved (engaged) in their own learning are more motivated in learning and consequently learn effectively. Moreover, Dornyei and Csizer (1998), also in their "ten commandments" of motivation proposed that promoting learner autonomy is one of the 'commandments' to students' motivation in learning. Therefore, teachers need to develop autonomy among students in order to motivate them into their learning.

On the other hand, Spratt et al. (2002) in their article "Autonomy and motivation: which comes first?" discussed the notion of priority of motivation to autonomy whereas autonomy mostly in the literature is introduced as the product of motivation. In line with this, Spratt et al. (2002) conducted a larger-scale study of Hong Kong tertiary students to investigate which one: autonomy or motivation comes first. Five hundred and eight participants from nine different parent departments were surveyed through a questionnaire. The aim of this study was to assess students' readiness for learner autonomy in language learning by examining their perception of accepting responsibility for themselves or those of their teachers', their self-confidence in studying and acting autonomously as well as their assessment of their motivation level in learning English. The results of this study showed learner motivation played a crucial role in students' readiness to become autonomous.

While increased student motivation has been found to enhance student autonomy in western context, the relationship between these variables in Asian context is still unclear. Identifying the relationship between students' language learning motivation and autonomy level will assist English teachers in instructing and applying appropriate programs. Thus, the current study attempts to answer the following research questions:

- 1. To what extent are students autonomous?
- 2. To what extent are students motivated in their language learning?
- 2.1. What are the extents of each subcategories of motivation among ESL secondary school students?
- 3. Is there any relationship between students' language learning autonomy extent and their motivation level?
- 4. Is there any relationship between each subcategories of motivation and language learning autonomy extent? What are the best motivational predictors that are most effective in predicting students' language learning autonomy? How much variance in language learning autonomy can be explained by the set of best predictors?

METHOD

Participants

In sampling procedure, some criteria such as: the achievement of school and students in English, race and gender were considered. The participants of this study were Lower Form 6 students in Selangor State Malaysia. This study applied a multi-staged, area cluster, stratified, random sampling design in which almost equal number of participants from Malay, Chinese and Indian were chosen. Besides, the researcher stratified the gender factor to minimize the potential errors. According to the data obtained from Malaysia Ministry of Education 2011- 2012 academic year, there were 5512 Lower Form 6 students in the educational year 2011-2012 in Selangor state secondary schools. Based on Krajcie and Morgan (1970), 361 Lower Form Six students were determined as the sample size representative. There were 218 (60.6 %) female and 142 (39.4 %) male, while 120 (33.3%) were Malay, 142 (39.4%) were Chinese, and 98 (27.2 %) were Indian. The age of the participants ranged from 18 to 19 years old.

In order to have equal number of participants in each district, the data was collected from different districts in Selangor such as: Seri Kembangan, Shah Alam, Cheras, Klang, Kajang, Subang Jaya, and Petaling Jaya and Puchung. Due to confidentiality of the number of each race, the researcher was not able to obtain any statistics about the number of each race from the Malaysian ministry of education. Therefore, the researcher by asking local teachers determined which schools might have more number of each race in these schools. The schools having more Malay, more Chinese, and more Indian students were randomly chosen. From each school, only 50 percent of Lower form 6 students were considered.

Instrumentation

The Questionnaire for the capacity of students' autonomy

Lai (2001) called for adopting more analytical approach to assess the capacity of learner autonomy. Autonomous learning capacity is defined as "the learner's ability to set realistic goals for learning, identify scope of learning, relevant materials to work with and related activities to engage in, and skillfully employ them for monitoring their own learning, set their own pace for learning, and conduct self-assessment" (Lai, 2001; p.39). Having an extensive reading of the literature on learner autonomy and taking Malaysia's ESL teaching and learning context into careful consideration, the researcher developed a questionnaire which included two aspects: metacognitive strategies (Wenden, 1991) and ability to work individually (Benson, 2001) to measure students' autonomy capacity. This questionnaire was translated into Malay, the national language, in order to enhance students' understanding of the questionnaires. The Malay version of the questionnaires were given to two lecturers who had experience in translation and interpretation, and they were asked to back-translate these questionnaires to English. Finally, after going through many revisions, some minor changes were done and the translators and the researcher agreed upon the final versions. The value of reliability for Autonomy Extent was .827.

The Questionnaire for Language Learning Motivation

Language Learning Orientations Scale- Intrinsic Motivation, Extrinsic Motivation, and Amotivation (LLOS-IEA) developed by Noels, Pelletier, Clement and Vallerand (2000) was used to probe students' language learning motivation level. This questionnaire contains 21 items, which each section contains three questions for each of different subscales: Amotivation, External regulation, Introjected regulation, Identified regulation, Intrinsic Motivation-knowledge, Intrinsic Motivation-Accomplishment and Intrinsic Motivation-Stimulation. Through this questionnaire, students in this study were asked to rate the items based on the extent to which the proposed reasons corresponded with their own reasons for learning English, using a 4-point scale that ranged from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree'. In the current study, since the participants were English language learners, therefore second language learning were changed to English learning to be applied for this specific population.

In order to obtain the extent of students' motivation and to determine its correlation with the extent of autonomy, general mean was considered. The negative items for Amotivation category were reversed into positive items, i.e. the higher mean the higher motivated student is. The value of reliability for Language Learning Orientations Scale- Intrinsic Motivation, Extrinsic Motivation, and Amotivation was .759.

RESULTS

Research Question 1: To what extent are students autonomous?

The first objective of this study was to identify students' autonomy extent. To obtain the mean and standard deviation for students' language learning autonomy extent, descriptive statistics was run. An average mean of between 1-1.75 of autonomy extent shows low autonomy, a mean of between 1.76-2.51 indicates a moderately low autonomy, a mean of between 2.52-3.27 indicates a moderately high autonomy, and at last a mean of between 3.28-4.00 shows high autonomy. The obtained result for students' language learning autonomy extent showed that the mean (2.49) was considered as moderately low autonomous. In short, Lower Form 6 students had moderately low autonomy in their language learning (Refer to table 1).

Table 1. Mean and Standard Deviation of language learning autonomy extent

Variable	No of Items	М	SD
Autonomy Extent	18	2.49	.39

Research Question 2: To what extent are students motivated in their language learning?

To determine the extent of students' language learning motivation, descriptive statistics was applied. The mean score of 1-2.66 was considered as low motivation, a mean score of 2.67-3.51 was considered as moderately low, mean scores of 3.52-4.77 and 4.78-6.00 were considered as moderately high and high motivation respectively. The results from the descriptive statistics, as shown in table 2, showed that the students' motivation mean score and standard deviation were 4.47 and .47 respectively. It showed moderately high motivation level in studying English among secondary school students in Malaysia.

Table 2. Means and Standard Deviation of language learning motivation

Variable	N. of Items	Μ	SD
Overall Motivation	21	4.47	.47

Research Question 2.1. What are the extents of each subcategories of motivation among ESL secondary school students?

To determine the extent of each motivation subcategories, descriptive statistics was applied (table 3).

1	able 5. Mean and Standard deviation of each subcategory of Motivation Scale								
	Category	No. of Items	Μ	SD					
	External Regulation	3 (6,15,18)	4.77	.92					
	Intrinsic Motivation	(11,19,20,16,3,21,9,12,13)	4.26	.68					
	Introjected Regulation	3(2,10,17)	4.16	.90					
	Identified Regulation	3 (5,8,14)	3.86	.60					
	Amotivation	3 (1,4,7)	1.71	.81					

Table 5. Mean and standard deviation of each subcategory of Mouvation scale	Table 3.	Mean and	standard (deviation of	each subcategory	of Motivation scale
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Table 3 displays the mean and standard deviation for Motivation subcategories from the highest to the lowest as External Motivation (M= 4.77, SD=.92), Intrinsic Motivation (M= 4.26, SD=.68), Introjected Motivation (M= 4.16, SD=.90), Identified Regulation (M= 3.86, SD=.60), and finally Amotivation (M=1.71, SD=.81).

Research Question 3. Is there any relationship between students' language learning autonomy extent and their overall motivation level?

Based on the Pearson product moment correlation results (Table 4) and the magnitude of association guidelines (0.70 to 0.99= very strong association, 0.50 to 0.69= substantial association, 0.30 to 0.49= moderate association, 0.10 to 0.29 = low association, and 0.01 to 0.09= negligible association) adopted from Davis (1971), there was a negligible relationship between students' language learning autonomy and their motivation level (r = .094, n = 360, p < .076).

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Variable		Autonomy	Motivation
1.Language learning autonomy extent	Pearson Correlation	1	.094
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.076
	N	360	360
2.Overall motivation	Pearson Correlation	.094	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.076	
	N	360	360

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

Research Question 4. Is there any relationship between each subcategories of motivation and language learning autonomy extent?

To determine the relationship between language learning autonomy and the five dimensions of motivation, each dimension was plotted against language learning autonomy and Pearson product-moment correlation coefficients were computed. The results showed no curvilinear relationships were apparent from the plots. The results of the correlational analyses as shown in Table 5, based on the magnitude of association guidelines (0.70 to 0.99= very strong association, 0.50 to 0.69= substantial association, 0.30 to 0.49= moderate association, 0.10 to 0.29 = low association, and 0.01 to 0.09= negligible association) adopted from Davis (1971), indicated that two categories of motivation, as predicted, intrinsic motivation (r=123, n=360, p= .020) and identified regulation (r=.132, n=360, p= .012) correlated positively with language learning autonomy; whereas, amotivation (r=-.263, n=360, p= .001), external regulation (r=-.055, n= 360, p= .297) and introjected Regulation (r=-.115, n=360, p= .028) were correlated negatively with language learning autonomy.

Table 5. Correlation between Amotivation, External Regulation, Introjected Regulation, Indentified Regulation and Intrinsic Motivation with language learning autonomy

		1	2	3	4	5	6
1.Autonomy	PC Sig.	1					

	N	360					
2.Intrinsic	PC	.123*	1				
	Sig.	.020					
	N	360	360				
3.Identified	PC	.132*	.228**	1			
	Sig.	.012	.000				
	N	360	360	360			
4.Introjected	PC	115*	.360**	.066	1		
	Sig.	.028	.000	.214			
	Ν	360	360	360	360		
5.External	PC	055	.374**	.272**	.265**	1	
	Sig.	.297	.000	.000	.000		
	Ν	360	360	360	360	360	
6.Amotivation	PC	263**	211**	116*	041	114*	1
	Sig.	.000	.000	.028	.436	.030	
	Ν	360	360	360	360	360	360

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

Research Question 5. What are the best motivational predictors that are most effective in predicting students' language learning autonomy? How much variance in language learning autonomy can be explained by the set of best predictors?

Stepwise multiple linear regression procedures were applied to determine the best predictors of autonomy extent among subcategories of motivation. Dimensions of language learning motivation were entered into the regression equation according to their degree of relationship with language learning autonomy. Examining the best subset of motivational predictors to language learning autonomy, model 4 in Table 8 displays that four motivational orientations can best predict language learning autonomy. These variables include: identified, introjected, intrinsic and external regulation. Identified regulation was the best predictor (Beta= .131, p=.012) of autonomy extent, followed by introjected regulation (Beta= -.163, p= .003), intrinsic motivation (Beta=.197, p= .001) and external regulation (Beta= -.121, p=.001).

As shown at table 8, the relationship between the predictors and autonomy extent was R= .259, and the predictors explained 67% of the variability in autonomy extent (R^2 = .067, Adjusted R^2 =.0.56, p=.001).

Model	R	\mathbb{R}^2	Adjusted R ²	F	Beta	Sig.
1	.132 ^a	.017	.015	6.320	.131	.012 ^a
2	.181 ^b	.033	.027	6.058	163	.003 ^b
3	.235°	.055	.047	6.924	.197	.001 ^c
4	.259 ^d	.067	.056	6.367	121	.001 ^d

Table 8. Multiple Regression Results of Autonomy Extent and motivation subcategories

a. Predictor: Identified

b. Predictors: Identified, Introjected,

c. Predictors: Identified, Introjected, Intrinsic,

d. Predictors: Identified, Introjected, Intrinsic, External

The first predictor (identified regulation) explained 1.5 % of the variation with a p-value of .012 showing that if one unit of identified regulation adds on, .131 unit of autonomy extent will increase. The second predictor (Introjected Regulation) explained 1.2 % of the variation with a p-value of .003, indicating decrease of -.163 unit of autonomy extent if one unit of introjected regulation adds on. The third predictor (Intrinsic motivation) explained 2.0 % of the variation showing increase in one unit of autonomy if .197 unit of intrinsic motivation adds on, and the last predictor, i.e. external Regulation explained 0.9 % of the variation and with p-values of .015, indicating decrease of each unit of autonomy extent if .121 of external regulation adds on.

Multiple regression analysis showed that the independent variables of this study collectively explained only 5.6 % of the variance of the dependent variable. This indicated that 5.6% percent of the variance in language learning autonomy can be predicted from the variables: 1) amotivation, 2) introjected regulation, 3) intrinsic motivation and 4) external.

DISCUSSION

This research aimed to determine the extent of language learning autonomy and motivational orientations as well as the relationship between these variables. The best motivational orientation predictors for language learning autonomy were additionally investigated. According to self-determination theory, self-determined forms of motivation and autonomy in western society are highly and positively correlated. However, the relationship between these variables in eastern context is still unclear and deem necessary to be evaluated.

The results of Descriptive Statistics showed moderately low autonomy and moderately high motivation among language learners in Malaysia. Analyzing the data showed that the highest mean score among different motivational orientations belonged to external regulation. The correlational analysis also showed there was no relationship between students' language learning autonomy and their total score of motivation level. The results reveal the fact that motivation does not contribute to autonomy. In other words, those having high motivation would not inevitably show high level of autonomy. However, based on self-determination theory, autonomy implies motivation, bringing about initiative of action by doers' interest. The motive of doing action is believed to make learners autonomous in their learning. The results of this study can be justified as students are more externally motivated in their learning. Students' low autonomy is most likely due to high motivation to external orientations such as exams, getting more prestigious job later on, or getting better salary in future.

The findings of this study is concurrent with a study by Habibah, Sharifah, Samsilah and Sidek (2011) in which among various motivational predictors for academic performance, future time reference was observed to be the strongest predictor. Students are aware of the importance of getting higher scores in order to further their studies in higher education; therefore, they are motivated to study harder. In their study, the findings suggested that self-determination had a significant negative relationship with examination performance. Students who had higher level of autonomous regulation had lower final examination scores. In other words, students achieve higher in examination if they are receiving controlled regulation in order to study.

The result of the relationship between language learning autonomy extent and each categories of motivation showed that two categories of motivation, i.e., intrinsic motivation and identified regulation had positive but low relationship with language learning autonomy, whereas, the relationship between language learning autonomy and each of amotivation, introjected regulation and external regulation showed negative and low relationship. The findings of these relationships suggest that students' autonomy can enhance through intrinsic and identified regulation types of motivation as suggested by Deci and Ryan's (1985) self-determination theory. Students' lack of autonomy, as discussed, can be explained by their motive for external regulation, i.e. examination in order to achieve better in exams. External motivation limits their autonomy in learning since students are obliged to follow their teacher. Students consider their teacher as the 'fount of knowledge' whom they should obey. Therefore, they do not feel having more responsibility in their learning, but follow their teacher and get high scores in exams.

In line with the findings of this study, investigating Malaysian university students' motivational orientation, Thang (2004) also found out that Extrinsic Motivation had negative connotation to learning and accompanied with ineffective approaches. The findings of Thang's study showed extrinsic motivation is correlated to controlling factors and does not lead students towards intrinsic motivation nor increased perception of self-determination or competence.

This research showed that four motivational orientations predictors, i.e. identified regulation, introjected regulation, intrinsic motivation and external regulation seem to be the best predictors in explaining language learning autonomy. Among the best set of four motivational predictors, identified was found to be the strongest predictor, whereas external regulation placed at the last position showing that students should be encouraged to be intrinsically motivated in language learning in order to develop autonomy. Supporting self-determination theory while acknowledging its appropriate application for eastern context, the findings of this study suggest that encouraging students into their learning will most likely enhance students' language learning autonomy.

Acknowledgment

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest in the research.

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