

The Relationship between Motivation for Learning English as a Foreign Language and English Academic Achievement of Pathein University Students in Myanmar

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to investigate the relationship between motivation for learning English as a foreign language and English academic achievement of Pathein University Students in Myanmar. The instruments of this quantitative study were motivation questionnaire from Gardner's (2004) Attitude/Motivation Test Battery and English midterm test scores for data collection to 382 Pathein University Students in academic year 2020-2021 from Myanmar. The data analysis used Pearson's correlation coefficient using the Mean (M) and the Standard Deviation (SD). The finding showed that Pathein University Students have had a high motivation level for learning English as a foreign language. However, it was found that there was a negative relationship between Pathein University Students' motivation for learning English and English academic achievement. The indication can be, there were other factors that contribute to students' low English academic achievement level and English learning motivation was not one of those.

Key Words: Motivation, English academic achievement, English as a foreign language, Socio-Educational model, Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB), Pathein University Students, Myanmar

Introduction

Motivation is a vital aspect of achievement for students' learning. The achievement goal theory assumed the academic motivation is to be able to understand such as students' efforts to achievements goals. Many researchers are trying to find students' motivation levels in the English language and students learning achievement. This study intended to emphasize the relationship between motivation for learning English as a foreign language and the English academic achievement of Pathein university students in Myanmar.

Objectives

The following objectives will be investigated as the major aim of the current study:

1. To determine the motivation level for learning English as a foreign language of Pathein University Students in Myanmar.
2. To identify the level of English academic achievement of Pathein University Students in Myanmar.
3. To verify if there is any significant relationship between the motivation for learning English as a foreign language and the English academic achievement of Pathein University Students in Myanmar.

Literature Review

Motivation

In the Latin language, motivation means to move. Motivation is a behavioral activation of inner energy. According to the academic learning process, motivation is recognized as the main role of the students' learning (Romando, 2007). Pinner (2013) states that the defining term of motivation is very difficult, and it is used for investigating second language acquisition's improvement and the educational psychology levels scale. According to Gardner (2005), many researchers of psychology and science claimed that motivation has different habits and complex types and viewed as a multifaceted variable (Gardner, 2010). In learning specifically in English, motivation is normally viewed as a contributing factor for learners' academic achievement. This is the reason why, this study was conducted in order to understand whether in the context of Pathein University students in Myanmar, indeed, English learning motivation can be one of the contributing factors of their English academic achievement.

Learning English Academic Achievement

English academic achievement is one of the evaluation criteria which distinguish the successful the level of a student learning knowledge in subject matter and normally measured based on a test result from the university or school (Ekalia, 2017). The successful/unsuccessful level of student' learning is expressed through the scores form of the test results on the individual subject matter such as the English language. The result becomes the learning achievement measurement of students. Accordingly Feng et al. (2013) reported that learning achievement is the amount of the learner's management on materials of the learning object. Meaning to say, learning achievement can be influenced by different factors and is not only influenced by one factor.

Gardner's Socio-Educational Model of Second Language Acquisition

The socio-educational model of a second language acquisition (SLA) was used in many types of research as one of the factors for the second language (English) achievement. One function called a pair of individual difference variables such as motivation and language aptitude are fitting into this socio-educational model (Gardner, 2009). Gardner (2005) described that the fundamental model has the two main elements; ability and motivation which are related to the English language acquisition settings. In this model, the motivation can be influenced by the context, culture, and the educational field.

Attitude/Motivation Test Battery

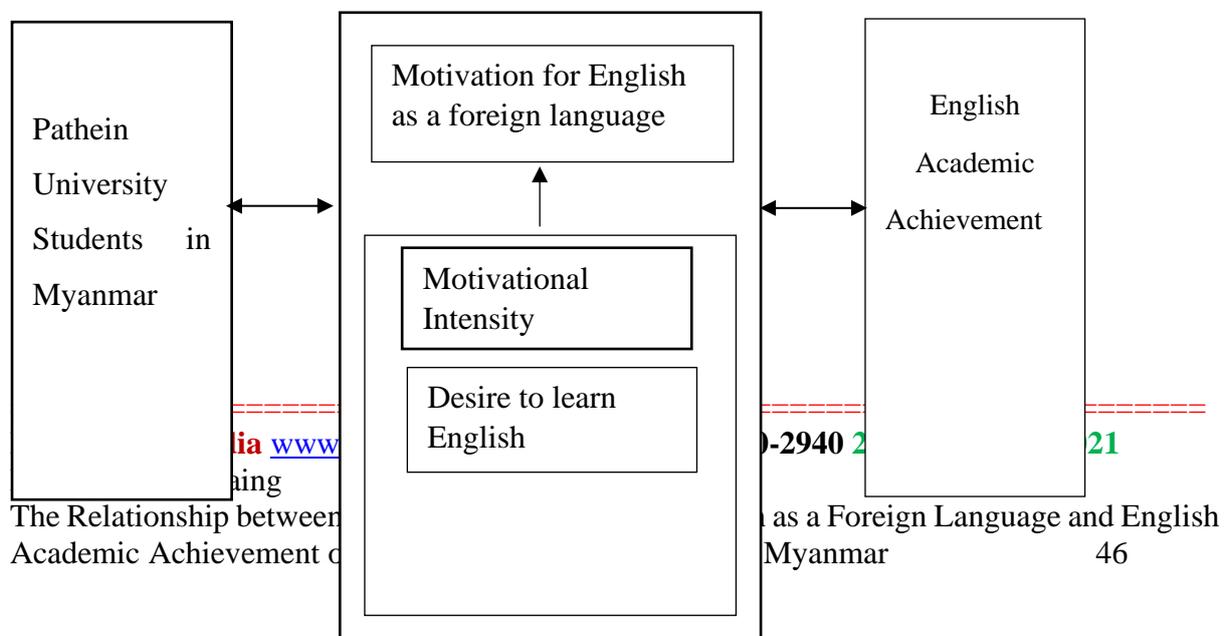
The Attitude/ Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) can be used to assess the diversity of Gardner’s model in research for more than 20 years. The international form of AMTB is an effective component while language ability is measured as a cognitive variable (Gardner, 1985a & Marina, 2018). The international version of AMTB was used in study such as Spain, Japan, Romania, Croatia, Brazil, and Poland for learning English as a foreign language of students (Gardner, 2004). It becomes a significant internal consistency reliability of the scales in the investigations. This was used to conduct a study on secondary students for determining the level of learning English as a foreign language (Gardner, 2004). In this study however, the focus was on the undergraduate students in Pathein University students, Myanmar.

Pathein University

Pathein University is located in the city of Pathein, Ayeyarwady region of Myanmar. Formally known in the ministry of education (Science and Technology) of Myanmar, it is a coeducational Myanmar higher education institute. Pathein University offers courses and programs leading to formally recognized higher education degrees in some areas of study. There are numerous academic and non-academic facilities and services for the students including a library, administrative services as well (Ayeyarwady University Ranking). Pathein University opens the library which is intended for the students to be knowledgeable learners in the future.

Conceptual Framework

The research focuses on investigating if there is a significant relationship between Pathein University Students’ motivation for learning English as a foreign language and English achievement. This study examined the level of Pathein University students’ motivation in three domains such as motivational intensity; desire to learn English; and attitude toward learning English in learning as a foreign language and students’ academic achievement.



Method

The quantitative correlational study of this research determined students' motivation for learning English as a foreign language. The finding of research objective 1 and 2 used descriptive statistics (Mean (M), and Standard Deviation (SD), whereas the research objective 3 used the Pearson Product- Moment correlation coefficient in the study.

Participants

The participants were the 382 Pathein University students aged between 18 to 30 years. They were studying English as a minor subject for the academic year of 2020-2021. The participants' families are from different walks of life who dream to succeed with their education and work in government and international institutions in the future.

Research instruments

There were two instruments in this study. The first one is AMTB international version motivation questionnaires developed by Gardner (2004). Secondly, the students' English academic achievement tests (midterm) score from the academic year 2020-2021 at Pathein University, Myanmar. The researcher used online survey.

Motivation for English language Questionnaires

Motivation question items were adapted from the international version or a Grader's international version of AMTB (Gardner, 2004). The question items were to measure the levels of motivational intensity, desire to learn English, and attitudes toward learning English of the Pathein University students. There were 10 items for each subscale of motivation. The research instrument AMTB was constructed for the model of second language acquisition that measures the major affective variables and subscales of the model (Gardner, 2005). The current study concerned three indicator scales with a total of 30 items.

Table 1 shows the numbers of the different items to be measured with its subscale respectively.

Table 1

The subscales of Attitude/Motivation Test Battery and Items in the Questionnaires

Variable	Subscales	Item numbers		
		Positive worded	Negative worded	Total number of items
Motivation	Motivational intensity	1,2,3,4,5	6,7,8,9,10	10
	Desire to learn English	11,12,13,14,15	16,17,18,19,20	10
	Attitudes toward learning English		26,27,28,29,30	10
	Total	15	15	30

The motivation in the English language questionnaire uses a 6-point Likert scale with 1 (strongly disagree) representing the lowest score and 6 (strongly agree) with the highest score. These three subscales in motivation in the English language have together positively and negatively worded items. Table 2 shows the value of response anchors for both positively and negatively worded items.

Table 2

The score of Positive and Negative Worded Items score

Items	Choice scores		Response Anchor 1 – 6			
	Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
Positively-worded	1	2	3	4	5	6
Negatively-worded	6	5	4	3	2	1

The Likert scale of 6 points of the original AMTB (Gardner, 2010) was used with the motivational questionnaire in the current study to measure the students' motivation for learning EFL. The 6-point Likert response scale will use for this survey ranged from 1-6, with a maximum score of six. (1= strongly disagree, 2 =moderately disagree, 3 =slightly disagree, 4= slightly agree, 5= moderately agree, and 6= strongly agree). Table 3 shows the interpretations of the scores. All the subscales of motivation were used with their positively and negatively worded items, thus, reverse coding is used for the negatively worded items.

Table 3 demonstrates the interpretation of the scores of motivational intensity, desire to learn English, attitudes toward learning English.

Table 3

Interpretation of the Scores of Motivational Intensity, Desire to Learn English, Attitudes toward Learning English

Scores	Mean scores	Likert choice	Interpretation
6:00	5.51 – 6.00	Strongly agree	Very high
5:00	4.51 – 5.50	Moderately agree	High
4:00	3.51 – 4.50	Slightly agree	Slightly high
3:00	2.51 – 3.50	Slightly disagree	Slightly low
2:00	1.51 – 2.50	Moderately disagree	Low
1:00	1.00 – 1.50	Strongly disagree	Very low

Note. Adapted from *Motivation and Second Language Acquisition*, by R. C. Gardner. 2010. p. 130.

Findings

The findings of research objective 1 to 3 were presented as the following:

Research findings for Research Objective 1

The first research objective was to determine the level of University Students' Motivation in learning EFL at Pathein, Myanmar. The following tables focused on the subscales of the motivation in learning English skills questionnaire. The 30 items of questionnaires had positive items (1-5, 11-15, 21-25) and negative items (6-10, 16-20, 26-30). On the other hand, the reverse coding was used for all the negatively worded items in calculation are presents in table 8.

The first table labelled as Table 8 was divided into four sections; first the different variables were being addressed in the study, the Mean (M), Standard Deviation (SD) and the interpretation.

Table 8

Interpretation Table of the Pathein University Students' Motivation for learning EFL at Pathein University in Myanmar

Variable	Pathein University Students		
	M	SD	Interpretation
Motivation intensity	4.45	1.13	Slightly high
Desire to learn English	4.96	1.00	High
Attitude toward learning English	5.18	0.86	High
Motivation for learning English as a foreign language	4.86	1.01	High

Table 8 indicates that the Mean (M) = 4.86 based on 30 items of Pathein University Students' motivation for learning EFL. The indication therefore is that there was a high level motivation among students as shown by the descriptive statistics. The motivational intensity has the M= 4.45 with the SD= 1.13; the desire to learn English has M= 4.96 and SD= 1.00; the attitude towards learning has M= 5.18 and SD= 0.86. The motivation for learning English illustrated that it has a M= 4.86 and SD= 1.01 the interpretation therefore is that there was a high level of motivation among Pathein University students who participated the survey of this study.

The following section describes the finding of Research Objective 1, motivation subscales called motivational intensity for learning EFL, desire to learn EFL, and attitude toward learning EFL. In the purpose of data analysis, all the negatively worded items were reverse coded to match with all the positively scales.

The subscales in motivation in learning English as a foreign language skills questionnaires are shown in the following tables 9-17. All the tables established the M scores, SD, and interpretation for motivational intensity, desire to learn English, and attitude towards learning English subscales.

Table 9

Levels of Pathein University Students' Motivational Intensity Positive Items

Item No.	Statements of MI	M	SD	Interpretation
1.	I make a point of trying to understand all the English I see and hear.	4.85	.79	High
2.	I keep up to date with English by working on it almost every day.	4.03	1.08	Slightly high
3.	When I have a problem understanding something in my English class, I always ask my teacher for help.	4.67	1.11	High
4.	I really work hard to learn English.	4.66	.91	High
5.	When I am studying English, I ignore distractions and pay attention to my task.	4.21	1.09	Slightly high
Overall		4.48	1.00	Slightly high

As shown, students' motivational intensity level tended to be slightly high. Among these different items however, items 1, 3 and 4 are considered *high*. The indication is that Pathein University students really tried their best to understand English so they would know

the language better as these were shown on the different items where they high level of agreement.

Table 10

Levels of Pathein University Students' Motivational Intensity Negative Items

Item No.	Statements of MI	M	SD	Interpretation
6.	I do not pay much attention to the Feedback I receive in my English class.	2.73	1.27	Slightly low
7.	I do not bother checking my assignment when I get them back from my English teacher.	2.38	1.17	Low
8.	I put off my English homework as much as possible.	3.14	1.41	Slightly low
9.	I tend to give up and not pay attention when I do not understand my English teacher's explanation of something.	2.25	1.19	Low
10.	I cannot be bothered trying to understand the more complex aspects of English.	2.38	1.22	Low
Overall		2.58	1.25	Slightly low

As shown in Table 10, this supported the Table 9 as the overall M and SD on the negative items were really *low*. Meaning, the there was a consistency on students' answers where they indeed show that their motivational intensity to learn English was *high*.

Table 11

Levels of Pathein University Students Motivational Intensity Positively worded and Negatively worded items

Item No.	Items	M	SD	Interpretation
1-5.	Positively worded items	4.48	1.00	Slightly high
6-10	Negative worded items	2.58	1.25	Slightly low

From Table 11, the *motivational intensity for learning EFL* of Pathein University students has an overall score of M= 4.48 with the SD= 1.00. This is indicated by the positively worded items 1-5. While the negatively worded items 6-10 have M= 2.58 and SD=1.25. Looking at the interpretation table the indication is that there is a consistency with regards to students' motivational intensity for learning English as a foreign language as shown in the survey. This connotes that indeed, students have a high motivational intensity with regards to learning English. According to the results, Students from Pathein University display slightly high motivational intensity in learning EFL. Overall, the mean score of students' motivational

intensity was 4.45 which can interpret as slightly high after the use of reverse coding the negatively worded items in calculation (see table 8).

Table 12

Levels of Pathein University Students' Desire to learn English Positive Items

No.	Item	M	SD	Interpretation
11.	I have a strong desire to know all aspects of English.	4.80	.94	High
12.	If it were up to me, I would spend all of my time learning English.	4.06	1.29	Slightly high
13.	I want to learn English so well that it will become natural to me.	5.13	.84	High
14.	I would like to learn as much English as possible.	5.14	.79	High
15.	I wish I were fluent in English.	5.29	.79	High
Overall		4.88	0.93	High

Table 12 illustrated the students desire to learn English. As shown, students had shown *high* agreement on positive items. Meaning to say their desire to learn the English language was indeed *high*.

Table 13

Levels of Pathein University Students' Desire to learn English Negatives Items

No.	Item	M	SD	Interpretation
16.	Knowing English isn't really an important goal in my life.	2.09	1.14	Low
17.	I sometimes daydream about dropping English.	2.79	1.29	Slightly low
18.	I'm losing any desire I ever had to know English.	1.62	.95	Very low
19.	To be honest, I really have no desire to learn English.	1.58	.89	Very low
20.	I haven't any great wish to learn more than the basics of English.	1.73	1.01	Low
Overall		1.96	1.06	Low

As for the negatively worded items, this shows again that there was a consistency with regards to their desire. As it shown, all the negatively worded items were low.

Table 14

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Levels of Patheingyi University Students Desire to learn English (DTLE) Subscale Items

Item No.	Items	M	SD	Interpretation
11-15.	Positively worded items	4.88	0.93	High
16-20	Negative worded items	1.96	1.06	Low

As the table 14 demonstrated, the overall scores of students' at Patheingyi University student in Myanmar desire to learn English has the mean score $M= 4.88$ and the $SD= 0.93$. This is shown by all positive items in Table 12. In contrary, the negative items have the mean score of $M= 1.96$ and $SD= 1.06$. The result of the survey shows that there is a consistency with students' desire to learn the English language as these are shown on their level of agreement with regards to the positive and negative worded items. According to the results, Students from Patheingyi University display high level of desire to learn EFL. Overall, the mean score of students' desire to learn EFL was 4.96 which can interpret as high after the use of reverse coding the negatively worded items in calculation (see table 8).

Table 15

Levels of Patheingyi University Students Attitude toward learning English (ATLE) Subscale Positive Items

No.	Item	M	SD	Interpretation
21.	Learning English is great.	5.13	.90	High
22.	I really enjoy learning English.	5.08	.75	High
23.	English is a very important part of the school program.	5.26	.81	High
24.	I plan to learn as much English as possible.	5.06	.78	High
25.	I love learning English.	4.87	.93	High
Overall		5.08	0.83	High

With regards to students' attitude, Table 15 showed that their attitude towards learning English is high. This means that they all had positive attitude towards learning English.

Table 16

Levels of Patheingyi University Students' Attitude toward learning English Negative Items

Item No.	Item	M	SD	Interpretation
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26.	I hate English.	1.45	.78	Slightly low
27.	I would rather spend my time on subjects other than English.	2.63	1.25	Low
28.	Learning English is a waste of time.	1.36	.75	Very low
29.	I think that learning English is dull.	1.67	.94	Low
30.	When I leave school, I will give up the study of English because I am not interested in it.	1.47	.75	Very low
Overall		1.72	0.89	Low

As for the negatively worded items, this had shown that there was always a consistency on students' answer, as the overall M and SD illustrated that students negative attitude towards learning the English language was quite low.

Table 17

Levels of Pathein University Students Attitude toward learning English (ATLE) Subscale Items

No.	Items	M	SD	Interpretation
21-25.	Positively worded items	5.08	0.83	High
26-30	Negative worded items	1.72	0.89	Low

According to table 17, the positive items shown in items 21-25 regarding students at Pathein University attitude toward learning English have mean scores of $M= 5.08$ with the $SD= 0.83$ which is interpreted as high. Consequently, the negative items 26- 30 mean score, $M= 1.72$ with the $SD= 0.89$ is interpreted as low. Based on the interpretation of the survey, there is a consistent agreement among positively worded and negatively worded items in the survey. This can be indicated therefore that the Pathein University students' attitudes toward learning EFL is consistently positive. According to the results, Students from Pathein University display high attitude toward learning EFL. Overall, the mean score of students' attitudes toward learning EFL was 5.18 which can interpret as high after the use of reverse coding the negatively worded items in calculation (see table 8).

Research Finding for Objective 2

The second research objective was used for the finding of the English academic achievement level of Pathein University Students in Myanmar.

English academic achievement was used from the midterm test scores (as an explanation from "English Test of Students' Learning Achievement" p. 45). Table 5 was showed to interpret the levels excellent, good, moderate, and fail for English achievement of

Pathein University Students. Table 13 demonstrates the means and standard deviations of Pathein University Students' achievement test respectively.

Table 18

Midterm Exam Scores List for English Academic Achievement Test of Pathein University Students in Myanmar

Grading	Numbers in calculation	Score	Interpretation	382 students
A	4	80-100	Excellent	6
B	3	70-79	Good	63
C	2	50-69	Moderate	274
D	1	0-49	Fail	39

Table 19

Interpretation of Means (M) and Standard Deviation (SD) for English Academic Achievement Test

English academic achievement test	M	SD	Interpretation
Midterm test scores of Pathein University students	2.09	.57	Moderate

Table 13 illustrated that the interpretation of the level of Pathein University Students' English academic achievement was "Moderate" point.

Research Finding for Objective 3

The third research objective was to know whether there was a significant relationship between the motivation for learning English as a foreign language and the English academic achievement of Pathein University Students in Myanmar.

The correlations between motivations for learning English as a foreign language and the English academic achievement of Pathein University Students in Myanmar was calculated.

Table 19 indicated that the correlation between motivations for learning English as a foreign language and the English academic achievement of Pathein University Students in Myanmar. Table 20 below shows the correlational analysis of the two variables. The finding showed that there was no statistical relationship between motivation and English achievement.

Table 20

Correlational analysis (Pearson Product – Moment Correlation Coefficient) between Pathein University Students’ motivation for learning EFL(M_EFL) and their English academic achievement scores (EAAS)

Variable	1 MLEFL	2 EAAS
1. Motivation for learning English as a foreign language	—	
2. English academic achievement scores	.06 (.211)	—

Note. The *p*-value appears within parentheses under the correlation coefficient, *N*= 382.

An examination of the bivariate correlation between the two main research variables in this study showed that Pathein University students’ motivation for learning English as a foreign language did not have a significant relationship with their English academic achievement scores, $r = .06, p = .211$.

Discussion

The purpose of this study is to identify the level of motivation for learning EFL of Pathein University students in Myanmar and their English academic achievement. As indicated in the study, students’ motivation was quite HIGH, however, their academic achievement was quite LOW. The indication therefore is that there was no significant relationship between students’ motivation when it would be based on their motivational intensity, desires and attitudes alone as motivation per se is a subject which is very hard to point out. Motivation is subjective; thus this might not be able to measure based on the survey alone. Motivational intensity, positive attitudes and learning desires need reinforcements to be materialized and seen through their academic achievement. Thus, motivation for learning English as a foreign language should be examined in different points of view, socio-economic factors, educational or institutional factors which involve learning environment, teachers, teaching materials and teaching strategies and perhaps the political factors, to be able to understand the core of motivation and its significant relationship on students’ achievement.

Conclusions

According to the study result, it can be concluded that motivation for learning English as a foreign language does not have a significant predictive power for their English academic achievement score. Therefore, the motivation for learning English as a foreign language was found to have no significant explanatory trend for the participants’ English academic achievement scores, since it is not possible to know how Pathein University Students’ English scores vary from knowing their motivation for learning EFL scores.

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