

# **The Correlation of Motivation on Achievement in English Language Among Selected Secondary Schools Students in Seremban, Malaysia**

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## **Abstract**

In learning the second language, motivation is always regarded as one of the vital elements. Motivation drives human to determine how to react to certain situation and to behave. This present quantitative study adapted Dornyei's L2 Motivation Self System (L2MMS) to determine the type of motivation among selected school students in Seremban, to study the different types of motivation based on gender and to analyse the correlation between all types of motivation and students' achievement in English Language achievement among 30 students selected randomly from schools in Seremban district. The study found that the L2 Learning Experience is the type of motivation among the students followed by Ideal L2 Self and Ought-to L2 Self. The study also revealed that both male and female students scored the highest level of Ideal L2 Self motivation, a moderate level of ought-to self motivation and the lowest level of L2 learning experience type of motivation respectively. It was also found that there was a positive correlation between the Ideal L2 Self type of motivation and students' achievement in the English Language. However, there was no correlation between the L2 learning experience and ought-to self types of motivation and students' achievement.

## **Keywords**

L2 Motivational Self System; L2 Motivation; English Language Achievement

## **1. Introduction**

The education system in Malaysia is divided into preschool education, primary education (which lasts for six years from 7 to 12 years old), secondary education (which lasts for five years from 13 to 17 years old), and tertiary education. In Seremban, for the secondary education system, there are six types of schools, which are national secondary schools (37), fully residential schools (5), national religious secondary schools (3), vocational college (1), technic school (1) and government-assisted religious schools (1). Majority of the schools in Seremban are national secondary schools. To enrol in this type of school, students must finish their primary education. There are also five fully residential schools here. A fully residential school was created to provide a planned, controlled, and conducive school environment to develop the potential of excellent students towards producing quality human capital. It also plays an important role in developing the best talent in the country and democratizing quality education to all levels of Malaysian society. This type of school aims to generate talent that matches global challenges. Another type of school is the national religious school. This type of school is committed to educate students with Islamic personalities, supply knowledge that meets worldly and afterlife demands, develop the potential of students in terms of interest, creativity, personality, and leadership. Students who graduate from this school get the opportunity to further their studies in various fields of knowledge in and outside the country. The next type of school is a vocational school. Vocational schools provide opportunities for students who are achieving well or moderately in academics and are interested in vocational (job-related) learning. The content of the vocational field has balanced theoretical and practical components. The objective of this stream is to help produce semi-professionals (technicians or technical assistants) in engineering and non-engineering fields. Technical school, on the other hand, is dedicated to students who excel in academics at the PT3 level. The objective of the technical field is to help produce professionals in engineering and non-engineering fields (agriculture and trade). Upon graduating from technical schools, students have the opportunity to further their studies to a higher level at university, polytechnic, or community college. They can also further their studies at technical matriculation college, general

matriculation college, or enrol in Form 6 at schools. The last type of school is government-assisted religious schools. These religious schools are registered with and administered by the Ministry of Education (MOE). The owners of the land and buildings are usually private parties. The state religious curriculum is maintained by MOE. This school also receives various facilities from the government (Ministry of Education, 2021).

The English language subject is taught in all these types of school. The use of English in Malaysia can be traced as early as the presence of the British way back in the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Pillai & Ong, 2018). Upon independence, Malay was made the national language (Article 152 of the Federal Constitution Malaysia 1963/1967) and thereafter an official language (National Language Act 1963/1967), and began to replace English in government administration and public education. Thus, English is known as the second language in Malaysia. The importance of these two languages is further enhanced in the Malaysia education system. The government, through the Ministry of Education, planned out the MBMMBI programme (To uphold Bahasa Malaysia and to strengthen the English Language) in 2010 to replace the PPSMI programme, which was repealed in 2009 with the aim for students to master Bahasa Malaysia and the English language. The main purpose of strengthening the English Language is to enable students to explore diverse knowledge and increase competition at the national level and international. Besides, the English Language is also a language of international communication that needs to be mastered well and effectively. As for this, there are three alternatives for teaching and learning of Science and Mathematics at schools, which are (1) teaching and learning of Science and Mathematics in Bahasa Malaysia, Chinese or Tamil (according to the type of school), (2) teaching and learning of Science and Mathematics in English and (3) teaching and learning Science and Mathematics in dual-languages (Bahasa Malaysia and English). Under MBMMBI Policy, a literature component was introduced for students to master the language through literature appreciation (The Policy of MBMMBI, Ministry of Education, 2010). The aim was to produce a society that could communicate efficiently as well as generating competitiveness among its community at the international level (Ministry of Education, 2010).

Henceforth, the importance of the English language is carried on in the Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025 where English is emphasised as one of the aspirations that will be needed to materialise the changes envisioned by all Malaysians. Under the aspiration 'Bilingual Proficiency', the proficiency of both Bahasa Malaysia and the English language as the international language of communication is aspired to be operated. Therefore, it is hoped that upon leaving schools, the students must be at least proficient enough to communicate in both languages at their workplaces (Malaysia Blueprint Education 2013-2025).

However, though much emphasise is given towards the English Language since the early age of the child, Malaysia ranked 30<sup>th</sup> in the English Proficiency Global Ranking in 2020 (EF English Proficiency Index, 2020). It marks the deterioration of the rank as can be seen from years to years; Malaysia ranked 17<sup>th</sup> (2017), 22<sup>nd</sup> (2018), and 26<sup>th</sup> (2019). The proficiency level dropped from high (2017-2019) to moderate (2020). On top of that, Malaysian students spend at least 11 years (from Standard 1 to Form 5) learning the English Language since it was made compulsory at schools. Apparently, many of them are unable to master the language when they are at school (Kalijah et al., 2019).

## 1.1 Objectives

The specific objectives of the present study are as follow:

1. to determine the type of motivation among students in English language learning
2. to study the different types of motivation in English language learners based on gender among the students in Seremban district
3. to analyse the correlation between all types of motivation and students' achievement in English language learning

## 2. Literature Review

Motivation is perhaps, one of the utmost important elements in second language learning (L2) (Susanto, 2018). It is a topic that many consider as the main determinant of second language learning achievement. Motivation to learn is the fundamental part of the motivation in learning. It is a drive or impulse in humans that determines the cause, direct and organise their behaviour. This is also related to attempts to complete the perceived needs, both physical and spiritual needs. Concerning learning activities, learning motivation means the overall driving force within students that can generate, guarantee, and provide direction for learning activities, to achieve the expected learning goals. With learning motivation, students have the drive to continue in the learning process that is followed (Wardani et al., 2020).

Dualistic theories divide motivation into two types, which are intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Reiss, 2012). Reiss further explains that intrinsic motivation is defined as "doing something for its own sake". For

example, a child draws a tree for no reason other than because she wants to do it. He also refers to extrinsic motivation as "the pursuit of an instrumental goal" as when a child draws a tree to please a parent or win a drawing competition. Intrinsic motivation is referred to doing an activity because it is naturally giving pleasure or attractive (Deci, Edward L, Ryan, 2010). Deci & Ryan (2010) explains that a person is intrinsically motivated when he does something just because he likes it. For example, a boy plays violin simply because he likes doing it. People with intrinsic motivation always see themselves with "a sense of choice and interest". Thus, intrinsically motivated behaviours do not need reinforcements, and they are the models of self-determination. Extrinsic motivation, on the other hand, is a form of reinforcement, which can boost students' progress while on their learning endeavors. Ultimately, extrinsic motivation can trigger students' passion when the motivation level is low. Thus, it is an important element to develop suitable behaviours towards learning and completing a task (Serin, 2018). According to Deci and Ryan's (1985) self-determination theory, extrinsic incentives impair intrinsic interest. For example, if the girl who likes drawing a tree is offered money for winning, in the future, the girl is likely to draw a tree less in the absence of an extrinsic incentive. Even though extrinsic motivation's effects do not last long, it is possible to say that extrinsic motivation grants people amusement and contentment from completing a task (Reiss, 2012). For example, a student who does not like to complete his assignment tries to complete it on time for the sake of a good grade.

There are three functions of motivation, namely (1) driving humans to behave, motivation as a driving force of any activity that must be carried out by the teacher; (2) making certain the direction of the action, namely towards the goals to be achieved; and (3) selecting actions, where actions must be determined in accordance to achieve the planned goals, by selecting only actions which are useful for that purpose (Wardani et al., 2020).

Research on motivation has been initiated and inspired by two Canadian physiologists, Robert Gardner, and Wallace Lambert. They suggested that the achievement in a second language is dependant on the same type of motivation in learning the first language (Gardner & Lambert, 1959). Since then, many researchers were interested in fields related to motivation and many have come with theories about this important element. As such, Dornyei (as cited in (Ushioda & Dörnyei, 2017) eloquently stated that the history of motivation in foreign language develops in three distinct stages which are the social-psychological period, the cognitive-situated period, and lastly, the process-oriented period.

The Social Psychological Period (1959-1990) has always been related to Robert Gardner in his bilingual context-based in Canada. He suggested that motivation is a complex construct that to give it a simple definition is an injustice (Gardner, 2010). He further emphasises that a motivated person is someone who sets his own goal and strives hard to materialise it. Guerrero (2015) suggests that to understand language learner's motivation, the foundation is the combination of Gardner's theory, social contexts, and attitudes towards L2 and L2 communities. Other than Garder, Clement et al. (as cited in (Nguyen, 2018), proposes the concept of *linguistic-self confidence* and Schumann (1986) (as cited in Guerro, 2015) introduced the *acculturation theory*.

The revolution in understanding motivation embarks into The Cognitive-Situated Period (1990's). As many theories bloomed in this field of research, this period aimed to switch the focus of the investigation back to the psychological field as the emphasis was given to cognition (or mental process). One prominent motivation theory, developed by Deci & Ryan (1985) called the Self-Determination Theory where extrinsic motivation, rather than doing an activity for pleasure and enjoyment, is referred to as for its instrumental value. This theory is categorised into four different subtypes which are external regulation, introjection, identification, and integration which all reflect different degrees of autonomy and self-determination (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Another prominent researcher on motivation, Dornyei (1994) proposes three different levels of motivation, namely language level, learner level, and learning situation level. He also suggests the use of tasks as tools to measure L2 motivation to make it easier to break down the understanding between the types of motivation in language learning.

The last stage, or perhaps the recent stage is The Process-Oriented Period. This period has three important perspectives on L2 motivation, which are the motivation for and during engagement by Williams and Burden (as cited in Dornyei & Ushioda, 2011), motivation in action, and motivational stages by Dornyei and Otto (as cited in Dornyei & Ushioda, 2011) and Ushida gave attention to the learner's temporary motivation.

The L2MMS instrument used in this study was put forward by Dornyei (2009). He conceptualizes the theory based on possible selves and future self-discrepancy theory in the psychological field. It encompasses three core components, which are the ideal self, ought-to, self, and L2 learning experience (Csizér & Dörnyei, 2005). Dörnyei conceptualises the ideal self-interest as the ideal L2 self, cultural interest, integrativeness, instrumentality promotion, and attitude to the L2 community. Whereas, the ought-to self proposes external demands such as influence from family and friends and this component avoids negative outcomes that might come from external expectations. L2 learning experience, on the other hand, refers to immediate L2 learning situations and experiences for example the impact given by the teachers, the curriculum, and the successful experiences. Thus, L2MMS

instruments are largely used to measure the motivation of students in L2 learning (Butler, 2016; Moskovsky et al., 2016; Darling & Chanyoo, 2018; Subekti, 2018; Taguchi et al., 2018; By & Laohawariyanon, 2019; Kim, 2020; Liu, 2020 and Ramirez, 2021).

There is an abundance of studies done internationally and locally when it comes to motivation as factors in language learning achievement. There are several studies done involving secondary school and university students in Malaysia. A study to examine the effects of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation on student science achievement using the Trends in Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS) 2011 data was done. The results showed that students with high intrinsic motivation perform better than students with low intrinsic motivation (Leong et al., 2018). Three hundred and sixty students (106 girls and 264 boys) were selected at thirteen vocational colleges students' all around Malaysia to identify the relationships between parental involvement and achievement motivation. The results showed that parental involvement was positively related to achievement motivation and students' achievement which in turns achievement motivation also related to students' achievement (Omar et al., 2018). In a Chinese School in Penang, students are more instrumentally motivated than integratively motivated in ESL learning (Hong & Ganapathy, 2017). A study among 80 students of Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Lepar Utama found out that teachers' influence, personal attitude, and parental influence do influence affecting students' motivation to learn a second language (Rahman et al., 2017). It was also found that students in a private university had a high level of instrumental motivation for learning English (Azar & Tanggaraju, 2020).

Other than in Malaysia, a study among 97 students in Indonesian university found out that there is also a positive relationship between learning motivation and direction for the achievement of students (Riswanto & Aryani, 2017). Ainy & Pratama (2020) suggested that there is a positive and significant correlation between student learning motivation and student learning outcomes. There was a positive but low correlation between intrinsic and achievement factors in a study among 462 Turkish students which aimed to investigate their motivation and attitudes towards learning English as a foreign language at a state university in Turkey (Genc & Aydin, 2017).

There are also numerous studies pertaining to motivation and gender. It has been largely discussed how males and females differ pertaining to learning processes. These differences are mainly due to the distinct roles taken by them based on different expectations that society puts upon them (Zaccone & Pedrini, 2019). Early theories of achievement motivation focused on differences in men's and women's motives for success. Earlier, women were perceived as fearful of success as Horner (1975) (as cited in Horner, 2005) concluded that "most women have a motive to avoid success, that is, a disposition to become anxious about achieving success because they expect negative consequences such as social rejection and/or feelings of being underfeminine". Thus, there was a psychological hindrance to women's achievement, which was fear of success. Since then, numerous studies were done and there are changes in the role of gender and motivation. For example, African American girls were reported to have a stronger learning goal orientation than African American boys (Middleton & Midgley, 2000). In Malaysia, a study was done to investigate the level of motivation to read English books across genders and teachers' perceptions of students reading motivation in the Malaysian classroom. This study among 20 primary school students in Johor Bahru found that female students have a higher reading motivation to read English books than male students (A. N. Abdullah & Yunus, 2019). Respondents in a study to examine the interaction effects of gender and motivational beliefs on students' self-regulated learning showed that female students with more self-efficacy have higher self-regulated learning (M. N. L. Y. Abdullah, 2016). This study was done among 322 secondary school students from two ICT-integrated schools located in Peninsular Malaysia. A study to investigate the effects of the socio-cultural factors on the motivation of female and male students in 14 Arab and non-Arab countries through 14 studies was done. The findings indicated that both genders in the two groups share some interest in motivation for learning English. It was also found that female students' integrative motivation and attitudes towards English are higher than male students (Al Harthy, 2017). Female students are found to be more successful at learning English as a foreign language than male students in a study done among 185 students in Bosnia (Bećirović, 2017). In a study done among 423 fifth-year students in public elementary schools in western Japan, male students showed a tendency toward lower engagement, lower internally regulated motives, and higher externally regulated motives (Oga-Baldwin & Nakata, 2017).

Indeed, motivation is an important element in determining language learning achievement among students. Having said that, this paper aimed to achieve the purpose of determining the type of motivation among students in English language learning, studying the different types of motivation in English language learners based on gender, and analysing the correlation between all types of motivation and students' achievement in English language learning.

### 3. Methods

#### 3.1 Design, Population, and Sample

The design for this research was a quantitative approach to determine the type of motivation and gender. The study was done among 30 participants consisted of 14 (46.7%) male and 16 (53.3%) female of form 4 students aged 16 years old randomly selected from schools in the Seremban area. The English language achievement was measured based on the school-based PT3 public examination when they were in form 3.

#### 3.2 Instruments: The L2 motivational self-system (L2MSS) questionnaire

The instrument to measure the quantitative data was adapted from Dornyei's Second Language Self Motivation System (L2SMM). It covered three dimensions whereby each dimension consisted of nine questions. The questionnaire had 27 items (Cronbach alpha  $\alpha=.946$ ). The three dimensions covered were:

- i. ideal L2 self (9 items) ( $\alpha=.948$ ), which measured students' view of themselves as successful English speakers, for example, "I can imagine myself living abroad and having a discussion in English."
- ii. Ought-to L2 self (9 items) ( $\alpha=.880$ ), which involved important others' view of how important learning English is to avoid negative outcomes, for example, "I study English because people around me think it is important."
- iii. L2 learning experience (9 items) ( $\alpha=.954$ ) that concerned what extent respondents like the English learning environment, for example, "I always look forward to English classes."

All the items were placed on a five-point Likert scale ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree", with values 1 to 5 to each of the descriptors respectively.

#### 3.3 Analysis of data

The data obtained from the questionnaire was computer-coded and analysed using Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26. The questionnaire was calculated based on scores and descriptive statistics. The participants in the study were voluntary; they filled in the questionnaires and a consent form online. The overall Cronbach Alpha value was computed to show the reliability of each L2MSS item. Then, correlation analyses (Pearson) were conducted to identify the relationships between the L2MSS scales and the participants' achievement in the English language.

### 4. Data Collection

The study was done among the form 4 school students in Seremban district. The L2MSS items by Dornyei were converted in a google form for the students to answer. The google form was distributed to students randomly. A month was the duration of time before the results were analysed. The questionnaire was divided into two parts where Part 1 dealt with the demographic questions and Part 2 dealt with the L2MSS questionnaires designed by Dornyei. When the number of respondents reached 30, the results were gathered and analysed using SPSS version 26. Using google form to distribute the questionnaire have several advantages namely "paperless, environmentally friendly, time efficient, labour costs, accurate recapitulation of respondents' answers and practical (Rohmah et al., 2018).

### 5. Results and Discussion

#### 5.1 Results of Descriptive Analysis

The findings of this study were discussed based on the objectives of the research which are the type of motivation, type of motivation according to gender, and the correlation between all types of motivation and students' achievement.

#### 5.2 Type of motivation

**Table 1:** Means and Standard Deviations of L2MSS Scales

	The whole sample (N=30)	
	M	SD
L2CM	3.8185	0.76198
IL2S	3.9037	0.92399
OL2S	3.6148	0.87525
L2LE	3.9370	1.04300

Notes : L2CM = criterion measures; IL2S= ideal L2 self; OL2S = ought-to L2 self; L2LE = L2 learning experience

Table 1 shows the types of motivation among students in English language learning. Two of the three types of motivation are at the high level. Ought-to L2 Self marks a moderate level (Mean=3.6148; SD = 0.8725) which is the lowest mean. It is followed by Ideal L2 Self which is also at a high level (Min = 3.9037; SD = 0.92399).

The highest mean is L2 Learning Experience (Min = 3.9370; SD = 1.04300). Thus, L2 Learning Experience is the type of motivation among students in English language learning.

## 5.2 Type of motivation according to gender

**Table 2:** Gender

		Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
<b>Gender</b>	<b>Male</b>	14	46.7	46.7
	<b>Female</b>	16	53.3	100.0
	<b>Total</b>	30	53.3	

Table 2 depicts the frequency and percentage of respondents based on gender. Out of 30 respondents, 14 (46.7%) are male while 16 (53.3%) are female.

## 5.3 Type of motivation and gender

**Table 3:** Type of motivation and gender

<b>Ideal L2 Self-</b> <b>motivation</b>	<b>Low</b>	<b>Moderate</b>	<b>High</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Female</b>	7	4	5	16
<b>Male</b>	7	4	3	14
<b>Total</b>	14	8	8	30
<b>Ought-to Self</b> <b>motivation</b>				
<b>Female</b>	6	7	3	16
<b>Male</b>	6	7	1	14
<b>Total</b>	12	14	4	30
<b>L2 Learning</b> <b>Experience</b>				
<b>Female</b>	9	5	2	16
<b>Male</b>	9	4	1	14
<b>Total</b>	18	9	3	30

Table 3 shows the cross-tabulation table of gender and the three types of L2 Self-motivation. Both male and female respondents had L2 Learning Experience as the lowest type of motivation with 9 (56.25%) of female students and 9 (64.28%) of male students. Both female and male respondents both share the ought-to self-motivation moderately with 7 (43.75%) of female and 7 (50%) of male respondents respectively. The highest was the ideal L2 self-motivation with 5 (31.25%) female and 3(18.75%) male respondents respectively. Thus, students had high Ideal L2 Self due to the highest number of frequency in the high level.

## 5.4 Correlation between achievement and type of motivation

**Table 4:** Correlation between achievement and type of motivation

	<b>Ideal L2 Self</b>	<b>Ought-to Self</b>	<b>Learning Experience</b>
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<b>Achievement</b>	<b>Pearson Correlation</b>	.376*	.022	.000
	<b>Sig. (2-tailed)</b>	.041	.908	1.000
	<b>N</b>	30	30	30

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

A Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was computed to assess the type of motivation and students' achievement in the English language. For the Ideal L2 Self type of motivation and the students' achievement, there was a positive correlation between the two variables where  $r=0.376$ ,  $n=30$ ,  $p=0.41$ . There was no correlation between the ought-to self type of motivation and the students' achievement where  $r=0.22$ ,  $n=30$ ,  $p=0.908$ . For the last type of motivation, which is learning experience, there was no correlation too where  $r=0.000$ ,  $n=30$ ,  $p=1.000$ .

## 6. Conclusion

This pilot test aimed to investigate the correlation between motivation and students' achievement in the English language using the PT3 public examination among the form four students from selected schools in Seremban. In conclusion, the findings of the present study lend empirical support for the correlation between motivation and students' achievement. This supports the motivation theory by Gardner (1959) and L2 Motivation Self-System by Dörnyei (2005) that motivation "plays a vital role in stimulating learners' interest towards the target language thus improve the proficiency in the target language" (Nguyen, 2018).

The findings depicted three important points; the L2 learning experience motivated the participants the most, there was no significant difference between male and female respondents pertaining the type of motivation and there was a correlation between the Ideal L2 Self type of motivation and students' English Language achievement.

More comprehensive investigations based on this study can be done for future research. This study can be extended by including social economic factors as factors that influence learners' academic achievement. Other subjects, other than English language can be examined too. It would also be interesting to know other age groups' type of motivation based on gender.

This study could be a reference for teachers in Seremban in boosting their students' motivation in English language learning.

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