

UNDERGRADUATES' MOTIVATION AND METACOGNITIVE LEARNING STRATEGIES IN LEARNING ENGLISH



Unemployment of undergraduates has often been attributed to their poor command of English and communication skills. Despite provision of English proficiency courses in tertiary institutions, their mastery of the language is still worrisome. The aims of this study were to identify the types of motivation for learning English and the use of metacognitive strategies to manage the learning. A survey of 207 undergraduates in a tertiary institution in Malaysia using Gardner's Attitude Motivation Test Battery (1972) and Oxford's Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (1990) revealed that it was instrumental motivation that drove them to learn English. The reasons commonly given were the status of English as a global language, a means to communicate with others, and the opportunity to get better jobs and gain knowledge. The potential pragmatic gains of second language learning were considered far more useful than learning English to gain respect from others. The participants reported regular use of metacognitive strategies. The most frequently used category was evaluating own learning, with 89% of the undergraduates preferring to learn from their mistakes. This was followed by arranging and planning own learning which often took the form of finding ways to be better English learners and setting long-term goals. In order to center their learning, 86% of the undergraduates drew upon their background knowledge to enhance their comprehension. The findings suggest that these language learners are independent in their learning but their actual use of metacognitive strategies and the effectiveness of the usage need further investigation.

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