

**A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF STUDENTS' MOTIVATION FOR
LEARNING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE ACCORDING
TO THEIR PREFERENCES FOR INDIRECT LEARNING
STRATEGIES AT NELSON ENGLISH LANGUAGE CENTRE,
YANGON, MYANMAR**

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Abstract: The purpose of this study was to examine the difference between the students' motivation for learning English as a Foreign Language according to their preferences for indirect learning strategies at Nelson English Language Centre in Yangon, Myanmar. This research was designed as a quantitative comparative study. A total of 215 students from Intro, Level 1 and Level 2 at Nelson English Language Centre in Yangon participated in this study research. Data were collected using a survey questionnaire, which was adapted from the international version of Gardner's Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) for motivation and Oxford's Strategy Inventory for Language Learning questionnaire (SILL) for indirect learning strategies. The collected data were analyzed first through descriptive statistics (i.e., means, standard deviations, frequencies and percentages) and then through inferential statistics (i.e., one-way analysis of variance) for statistical hypothesis testing. The findings indicated that the students' motivation for learning EFL in Nelson English Language Centre was "High". Besides, the students preferred metacognitive strategies the most followed by social strategies, mixed strategies and affective strategies. These research findings showed that there was no significant difference between the students' motivation for learning EFL according to their preferences for indirect learning strategies. The recommendations for teachers, school administrators and future researchers are provided based on the findings of this study.

Keywords: Motivation, indirect learning strategies, preferences, English language as a foreign language, comparative study, Myanmar

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Introduction

English has become an essential language for Myanmar people being to speak and communicate with ASEAN countries and the English-speaking countries. English is also one of the most used foreign languages in most of the non-governmental organizations and foreign or private business companies in Myanmar. Recently, there have been great improvements in the field of teaching and learning English as a foreign language (EFL) in Myanmar because English is widely used by many students for many reasons, for instance, students learn English to take international exams, e.g., TOEFL and IELTS (Hnin, 2017).

Lwin (2011) stated that English is taught as a foreign language and not as a second language in Myanmar. English as a foreign language (EFL) is taught as one of the compulsory subjects from primary to college and university level in Myanmar. However, the focus of teaching and learning is mostly on reading and writing than developing the listening and speaking skills because teachers in schools teach English as a subject, and students just learn English as a school subject to pass the exam, and narrowly learn a language for a communicative and academic purpose (Lwin, 2011).

Eventually, students could not acquire high proficiency skills in English because the examination questions are heavily focused on knowledge acquisition (Sein, 2015).

Dörnyei (1998) stated that motivation is broadly recognized by most of the teachers and researchers as one of the major constructs that have the huge positive impact on the success of L2 learning. Hancock (2007) also noted that academic achievement and motivation are interrelated.

Thus, students with higher motivation tend to be more successful than those students with lower motivation. Dörnyei (1998) claimed that an individual's ability and receiving good teaching methods are insufficient to succeed in L2 learning, without motivation.

Oxford also mentioned that language learning strategies are considered as an essential factor for influencing and deciding the success of language learning (Oxford, 1990). Oxford (1990) also noted that language learning strategies are closely related to various factors; such as gender, motivation, cultural background, attitudes and beliefs, learning styles and learning proficiency.

Among them, motivation is the most significant factor which influences language learning strategy use (Oxford, 2003). In other words, highly motivated learners tend to utilize various methods of learning strategies constantly than those with lower motivation.

Research Objectives

There are five research objectives for this study.

1. To determine the students' levels of motivation for learning EFL in terms of motivational intensity, desire to learn English and attitudes toward learning English at Nelson English Language Centre, Yangon, Myanmar.
2. To determine the students' level of motivation for learning EFL at Nelson English Language Centre, Yangon, Myanmar.
3. To determine the students' levels of preference among indirect learning strategies in terms of metacognitive strategies, affective strategies and social strategies for learning EFL at Nelson English Language Centre, Yangon, Myanmar.
4. To determine the students' preferences among indirect learning strategies for learning EFL at Nelson English Language Centre, Yangon, Myanmar.
5. To determine if there is a significant difference between students' motivation for learning EFL according to their preferences for indirect learning strategies at Nelson English Language Centre, Yangon, Myanmar.

Literature Review

Motivation in Language Learning

Motivation in L2 learning is not a simple construct because it requires other scales to be assessed. Dörnyei (1998) defined motivation is a combination of many affective factors which can be interpreted as the effort, persistence, desire, attitude and affect related to learning another language and how an individual actively participates in doing activities to acquire language material. Motivation plays an essential part of the learning because it helps the learners easier and more enjoyable to learn the subject, and once the learners are motivated they will try and put a big effort to know the related subject they are studying.

Gardner's Socio-Educational Model of Second Language Acquisition

Gardner's socio-educational model is based on the studies developed by Lambert's social psychological model (Gardner, 1985). This model is useful as a second language acquisition to examine the role of attitudes and motivation in L2 learning (Gardner, 1985). The model is typically created for the language learning situation in both foreign and second language learning contexts. The major concern of the model is motivation and the other scales which support motivation. The Gardner's (2005) model shows that the level of motivation has an influence on the student's language achievement. Gardner also mentioned that the attitude towards the learning situation and integrativeness are the variables that make-up motivation (Gardner, 2005).

Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB)

The Attitude/ Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) is a research instrument developed by Gardner based on the socio-educational model of second language acquisition in order to assess the variables and various components of the model (Gardner, 2005). The AMTB is composed of 11 scales with a total of 104 items. Among the many indicator scales, the researcher used only three subscales (i.e., motivational intensity, desire to learn the language and attitudes toward learning language) of motivation construct to measure the students' level of motivation to learn EFL in this study.

Language Learning Strategies

Bialystok (1978) described the learning strategies as a source of material which learners could use in order to improve their language skills in learning the second language. Many researchers have interpreted language learning strategies as tools, methods, techniques, steps, mental operations, and behaviors. MacIntyre (1994, as cited in Park, 2005) also stated language learning strategies as special techniques and tricks that were used by language learners to master in their language skills. According to Oxford (1990), language learning strategies are powerful tools which lead a learner to have more self-confidence and high language proficiency.

More effective learners utilized learning strategies regularly than less effective learners (Oxford, 2003). Oxford (1990) claimed that the use of language learning strategies is a key process and one of the most vital components of language learning, language proficiency, and for upgrading learner autonomy. Oxford's language learning strategies are distinguished into two main categories: direct and indirect strategies. In addition, each category is divided into three subcategories (i.e., direct learning strategies; memory strategies, cognitive strategies and compensation strategies, and indirect learning strategies; metacognitive strategies, affective strategies and social strategies) (Oxford, 1990).

Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL)

The Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) was created by Oxford (1990). The SILL questionnaire has been highly reliable and widely used in several studies in order to examine the use of language learning strategies in foreign and second language learning. The SILL questionnaire has been translated into 17 languages and used by over 9,000 students around the world (Oxford, 1990; Oxford, 2003). In this study, the researcher used only 21 items which were adapted from the 50-item SILL questionnaire.

Conceptual Framework

The major purpose of this research was to determine the students' level of motivation for learning EFL according to their preferences for indirect learning strategies (i.e.,

metacognitive strategies, affective strategies and social strategies) at Nelson English Language Centre in Yangon, Myanmar. The researcher engaged this study in Intro, Level 1 and Level 2 students at Nelson English Language Centre in Yangon, Myanmar.

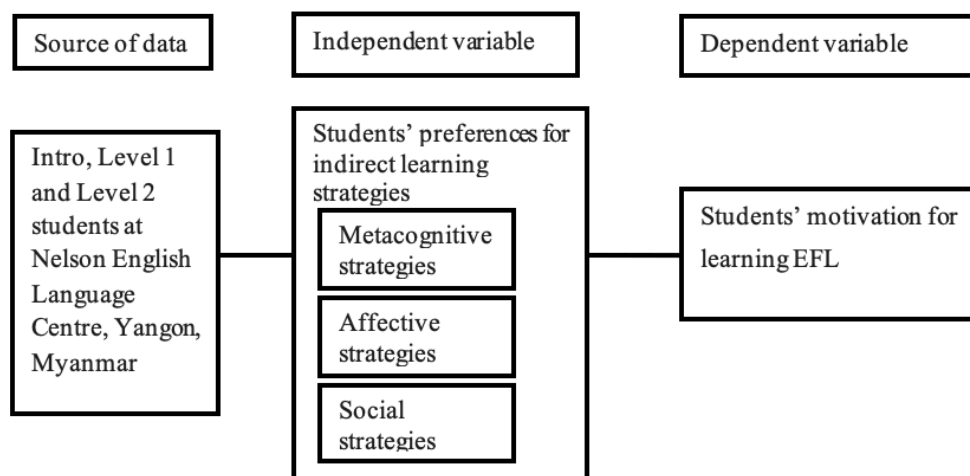


Figure 1. Conceptual framework of the study.

Method

This research was designed as a quantitative comparative study. The researcher utilized two instruments to address the research objectives: the Motivation for Learning EFL Questionnaire (MLEFLQ) and Indirect Learning Strategies Preferences Questionnaire (ILSPQ). The collected data were analyzed through descriptive statistics; means, standard deviations, frequencies, and percentages. Then, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was utilized to test the research hypothesis.

Population

The target of this research was 215 students from Intro, Level 1 and Level 2 who were studying EFL at Nelson English Language Centre in Yangon, Myanmar.

Research Instrument

For this study, the researcher adapted two sets of survey questionnaires as a tool for collecting the data. They are Gardner's (2004) AMTB questionnaire including 30 items and Oxford's (1990) SILL questionnaire including 21 items. The questionnaire was translated into Myanmar (Burmese) language, then verified and modified by two experts who have a strong background of translation from English to Myanmar.

The survey questionnaire consisted of two parts. The first part of the survey questionnaire identified the students' demographic information such as age, gender

and the levels of the respondents. The second part of the survey consists of a 30-item of Motivation for Learning EFL Questionnaire (MLEFLQ) and a 21-item of Indirect Learning Strategies Preferences Questionnaire (ILSPQ).

Motivation for Learning EFL Questionnaire (MLEFLQ)

The Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) is a research questionnaire which was originally created by Gardner in 1958 and extended by Gardner and Lambert in 1972 (Gardner, 1985). The MLEFLQ was adapted from the most recent revised international version of the AMTB by Gardner (2004). The researcher used three subscales of a motivation construct involving motivational intensity (10 items), desire to learn English (10 items) and attitudes toward learning English (10 items). A 6-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 2 = *moderately disagree*, 3 = *slightly disagree*, 4 = *slightly agree*, 5 = *moderately agree*, 6 = *strongly agree*) was used to determine the students' level of motivation for learning EFL. All the subscales used in this study have both positively and negatively worded items, thus, reverse coding was used for the negatively worded items.

Validity and Reliability of the MLEFLQ. Many researchers have broadly used AMTB in order to assess the affective elements of second language acquisition. Ushioda and Dörnyei (2012) presented that the AMTB has a good content and construct validity, and has been adapted for use in a variety of second language learning contexts. Gardner and MacIntyre (1993) also implemented a study to validate the instrument again by focusing on 92 university students enrolled in two different beginner French courses in Canada. The internal consistency reliability of MLEFLQ obtained for this study was .85, and it can be interpreted as good.

Indirect Learning Strategies Preferences Questionnaire (ILSPQ)

The researcher adapted a total of 21 ILSPQ items from the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) developed by Oxford (1990). The SILL was designed for EFL learners to investigate the frequency of language learning strategy use. The researcher used three subscales of the indirect learning strategies involving metacognitive strategy (nine items), affective strategy (six items), and social strategy (six items). A 5-point Likert-type scale (1= *never or almost never true of me*, 2 = *usually not true of me*, 3= *somewhat true of me*, 4= *usually true of me*, and 5=*always or almost always true of me*) was used to measure the students' preferences for indirect language learning strategies.

Validity and Reliability of the ILSPQ. The Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL) is one of the most widely used questionnaires in many studies of second and foreign language acquisition and teaching (Park, 2011). Oxford (1990) and Oxford and Burry-Stock (1995) reported the SILL with a good validity and high reliability according to many studies. Many reports had also shown the SILL has obtained a

high range of Cronbach's alpha value which was between .89 - .90 (Oxford, 1999). The internal consistency reliability of ILSPQ obtained for this study was .86, and it can be interpreted as good.

Procedure

A total of 215 survey questionnaires were distributed to Intro, Level 1 and Level 2 students at NELC in Yangon, Myanmar. The researcher personally distributed questionnaires and collected the data from 215 students on January 23 and 28 in 2018 respectively. This survey gave a 100% return rate consisting of 45 male (20.9%) and 170 female (79.1%) students.

The researcher used a statistical software program to analyze the collected data. For Research Objective 1, 2 and 3, descriptive statistics involving means (*M*) and standard deviations (*SD*) were used to determine the students' levels of motivation for learning EFL in terms of motivational intensity, desire to learn English and attitudes toward learning English, to determine the students' level of motivation for learning EFL, and to determine the students' levels of preference among indirect learning strategies in terms of metacognitive strategies, affective strategies and social strategies for learning EFL at NELC.

For Research Objective 4, descriptive statistics involving frequencies (*f*) and percentages (%) were used to determine the students' preferences among indirect learning strategies for learning EFL at NELC in Yangon, Myanmar. For Research Objective 5, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) test was used to compare students' motivation for learning EFL according to their preferences for indirect learning strategies at NELC in Yangon, Myanmar.

Findings

The findings of the study are reported according to the research objectives.

Research Objective 1

Research Objective one was to determine the students' levels of motivation for learning EFL in terms of motivational intensity, desire to learn English and attitudes toward learning English at Nelson English Language Centre, Yangon, Myanmar.

The findings of research objective one revealed that the students' levels of motivation for learning EFL in terms of motivational intensity, desire to learn English and attitudes toward learning English were high overall.

The mean score for each subscale was also interpreted as high: motivational intensity ($M=4.76$), desire to learn English ($M=5.29$) and attitudes toward learning English ($M=5.16$) respectively.

Research Objective 2

Research objective two was to determine the students' level of motivation for learning EFL at Nelson English Language Centre, Yangon, Myanmar. The findings for research objective two were reported in Table 1.

Table 1: Interpretation of Means (M) and Standard Deviations (SD) for Motivation and its Subscales

Subscales of motivation	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Interpretation on motivation
Motivational intensity	4.76	1.07	High
Desire to learn English	5.29	.85	High
Attitudes toward learning English	5.44	.68	High
Total	5.16	.88	High

In general, Table 1 shows that the students' total mean scores of motivation for learning EFL were $M=5.16$, which was regarded as high according to the interpretation criteria. Thus, the findings showed that the students at NELC had a high motivation for learning EFL.

Research Objective 3

Research objective three was to determine the students' levels of preference among indirect learning strategies in terms of metacognitive strategies, affective strategies and social strategies for learning EFL at NELC, Yangon, Myanmar. The findings for Research Objective 3 were reported in Table 2.

Table 2: Interpretation of Means (M) and Standard Deviations (SD) for Indirect Learning Strategies and its Subscales

Indirect learning strategies preferences	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Interpretation on indirect learning strategies
Metacognitive strategies	3.75	.84	High frequency
Affective strategies	3.22	1.11	Medium frequency
Social strategies	3.74	.99	High frequency
Total	3.59	.97	High frequency

According to the findings of research objective three, overall mean scores of students' levels of preference among indirect learning strategies were 3.59, which was interpreted as high frequency. Also, the students had a high level of preference for metacognitive strategies ($M= 3.75$), followed by social strategies ($M=3.74$) and affective strategies ($M=3.22$) respectively.

Research Objective 4

Research objective four was to determine the students' preferences among indirect learning strategies for learning EFL at Nelson English Language Centre in Yangon, Myanmar. The findings for Research Objective 4 were presented in Table 3.

Table 3: Frequencies and Percentages of the Students' Preferences Among Indirect Learning Strategies

Indirect learning strategies preferences		
	Frequency	Percentage
Metacognitive strategies	101	47
Affective strategies	11	5.1
Social strategies	91	42.3
Mixed strategies(two or more than two strategies)	12	5.6
Total	215	100

Based on the data analysis, Table 4 shows the percentages of students' preferences among indirect learning strategies for learning EFL. Overall, students preferred metacognitive strategies the most (47%, $f=101$), followed by social strategies (42.3%, $f= 91$), mixed strategies (5.6%, $f= 12$) and affective strategies (5.1%, $f= 11$).

Research Objective 5

Research objective five was to determine if there is a significant difference between students' motivation for learning EFL according to their preferences for indirect learning strategies at Nelson English Language Centre in Yangon, Myanmar. Table 4 presents the findings of the one-way ANOVA test for Research Objective 5.

Table 4: Results of the One-Way ANOVA Test on Students' Motivation for Learning EFL According to Their Preferences for Indirect Learning Strategies

Variable categories	<i>n</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>dfs</i>		<i>F</i>	<i>p</i>
				Between groups	Within groups		
Metacognitive strategies	101	5.21	.34				
Affective strategies	11	4.98	.33	3	211	1.63	.18
Social strategies	91	5.12	.43				
Mixed strategies (two or more than two strategies)	12	5.21	.43				

Note. There was no statistically significant difference between indirect learning strategies preferences (statistical significance level set as $p=.05$)

From the one-way ANOVA test, the finding indicated that there was no significant difference between students' motivation for learning EFL amongst metacognitive strategies ($M=5.21$, $SD=.34$), affective strategies ($M=4.98$, $SD=.33$), social strategies ($M=5.12$, $SD=.43$) and mixed strategies ($M=5.21$, $SD=.43$), $F(3,211)=1.63$, $p=.18$.

Discussion

This section is organized according to the main variables of this study.

Motivation for Learning English as a Foreign Language

The research findings showed that all the students from Intro, Level 1 and Level 2 at NELC were highly motivated for learning EFL. The findings indicated that students tended to have high motivational intensity in learning EFL. Based on the researcher's teaching experiences at NELC, most of the students at NELC were very competitive and put a lot of effort into learning English skills in their learning process. This could probably be because NELC holds student performance section once a week including presentations and talk shows. These activities and competitions were the reasons that students put more effort and efficiently in learning the language.

The finding also showed that students had a very strong desire to learn English very well so that it becomes natural to them. In Myanmar, English is considered to be the most important and required international language for

communication. Therefore, the demand for learning English as a foreign language is increasing day by day in order to apply in a variety of fields for business, education, entertainment, and education. Another factor that highly motivated the learners is because of their positive attitudes toward teachers and school program. According to the researcher's experiences, students from NELC were more likely to enjoy learning English in the classroom than students from average government schools. This could be NELC is a private intensive English training school which employs highly qualified local and international teachers and also has a favorable learning environment. The researcher assumed that well-prepared lesson plans and student-centered teaching and learning approaches might have a huge impact on students' attitudes toward learning the language. The findings of students' motivation for learning EFL were consistent with the previous study done in Korea by Park (2005) and in Iran by Gholanmi, Allahyar, and Rafi (2012) where students were motivated to learn EFL. Another study also reported that more motivated learners tended to use learning strategies more frequently (Oxford & Burry-Stock, 1995).

Indirect Learning Strategies Preferences

The findings reported that most of the students preferred metacognitive strategies and social strategies to mixed strategies and affective strategies. In this study, 47% of the students preferred metacognitive strategies, which are the most preferred indirect learning strategies. The previous report done by Chang and Liu (2013) in Taiwan showed that students with high proficiency levels preferred to apply metacognitive strategies more constantly than other strategies in learning EFL.

The current findings also showed that social strategies were the second most preferred strategies among the indirect learning strategies. A possible explanation could be that NELC provided 2 periods of lesson time in a week where students could interact with native speaker teachers for improving their speaking and communication purposes. That is likely the reason why students enjoyed their learning and social strategies were more constantly used than other strategies. It also showed that NELC students enjoyed learning through collaboration, observation, and interactions with others. This finding agreed with the statement of Oxford (1990) mentioning that social strategies are very important for learning language because language learners cannot learn a language without communicating with one another.

The mixed strategies and affective strategies were the least preferred strategies among the indirect learning strategies in this study. There were only a few students who preferred all kinds of indirect learning strategies. Moreover, the findings suggested that affective strategies were the least preferred strategies through indirect learning strategies. Based on the researcher's teaching experiences, most of the NELC students were not very good at controlling their emotional problems, because they were nervous and shy when they are told to do presentation and public speaking. The

students had some level of tension and worry of making mistakes when using English. The findings were consistent with the previous studies done by Xiao and Lynch (2017) in Thailand and by Park (2005) in Korea. Based on their data analysis, the findings showed that the participants had low usage of affective strategies compared to other strategies in learning a foreign language.

The Comparison of Students' Motivation for Learning EFL According to Their Preferences for Indirect Learning Strategies

The analysis of the data from this study revealed that there was no significant difference between the students' motivation according to their preferences for indirect learning strategies at NELC in Yangon, Myanmar. All the participants in this study were highly motivated in learning EFL regardless of their preferences for indirect learning strategies. Xu (2011) reported a positive correlation between students' motivation and learning strategies was found among Chinese graduates in China. The findings showed that all aspects of motivation did not affect the choice of the strategies used.

This current study did not show a statistical difference between students' motivation for learning EFL according to their preferences of indirect learning strategies. The finding suggested that students' motivation for learning EFL did not depend on their preferences for indirect learning strategies. According to the findings, the students at NELC had a very strong desire and positive attitudes toward learning English. This could be because the participants considered English to be a very important part of their further study and occupational objectives. In addition, the researcher assumes that the positive and supportive learning environment at NELC might be another factor that stimulated the students to be motivated learners. As it is a private language center, student-centered teaching approaches were encouraged rather than teacher-centered approaches. Also, students had more opportunities to explore their learning through sharing, observing, participating in different kinds of activities. Gardner (2010) stated that the curriculum, the teacher, the materials and quality of instruction influence the individual's level of motivation to learn a second language. Besides, the students tended to have high motivation and personal objectives to study English despite their preferences for indirect learning strategies. Therefore, the study can be concluded that motivated students are willing to learn EFL with any methods of learning strategies.

Recommendations

The researcher provided some recommendations for teachers, school administrators, and for future researchers based the findings of the current study.

Recommendations for Teachers

The researcher recommends teachers to give effective guidelines and provide some examples to show students how to use three types of indirect learning strategies. Through the advice and practice given by the teacher, students will know how to apply more relevant indirect learning strategies to improve their learning English skills. Therefore, teachers are suggested to manage their lesson plans by implementing variety of instructional strategies to find out their individual students' indirect learning strategies preferences. The researcher strongly recommends the learning activities that are led by teachers how to improve metacognitive strategies, affective strategies and social strategies in learning EFL. Overall, teachers are suggested to give a constant feedback on students' progress and encourage them to utilize indirect learning strategies regularly.

Recommendations for School Administrators

School administrators are suggested to provide regular professional development sessions for teachers in order to keep up to date with teaching and learning strategies. Besides, parent-teacher conferences should be held to give insightful suggestions regarding their children's study progress and academic achievements so that the parents might be able to guide and help their children at home.

Recommendations for Future Researchers

The future researchers are recommended to conduct the similar study in the rural setting in Myanmar. The research can also be done by comparing the groups of students through their English proficiency levels. The researcher also recommends future researchers to conduct larger studies not only in private schools but also in government schools in Myanmar. Further studies can be done by mixing both qualitative and quantitative research designs.

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