

# **Vocational High School Students' English Learning Motivation and Their English Learning Behaviors**

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## **ABSTRACT**

This study aimed at investigating vocational high school (VHS) students' English learning motivation and their English learning behaviors and examining relationships between them. In this study English learning behaviors were divided into in-class and outside-class learning behaviors. The researcher also examined significant differences in VHS students' English learning motivation and English learning behaviors between students of different English achievement levels. Moreover, the researcher looked into the relationship between in-class and outside-class English learning behaviors. Finally, the researcher examined if English learning motivation can be used to effectively predict in-class and outside-class English learning behaviors and if the resulting predictive relationships would vary subject to students' English achievement levels.

Participants in this study were 422 second-year vocational high school students, including 360 males and 62 females, from one vocational high school in central Taiwan. All the participants had studied English as a foreign language in formal school settings for at least four years, three in junior high schools and one in the present vocational high school. After entering the vocational high school, they had to take two monthly English exams and one final each semester; nearly all of them would take the national English exam for entering universities of technologies in Taiwan.

The instruments for this study included three questionnaires in Chinese. First, the Basic Personal Background Information Questionnaire contained 10 items designed by the researcher of the study to collect the participants' basic background information. Second, the English Learning Motivation Questionnaire was composed of 24 5-point Likert scale items adapted from Gardner's (1985) AMTB (The Attitude/Motivation Test Battery). Third, the English Learning Behaviors Questionnaire had 48 5-point Likert scale questionnaire items, including 24 in-class and 24 outside-class items, either adapted from Oxford's (1990b) SILL (The Strategy Inventory for Language Learning) or designed by the researcher of the study. Three school-wide English achievement

exams, with reading, writing, and listening components, were collaboratively prepared by the English teachers at National Taichung Industrial High School and were used to evaluate the participants' English achievement levels in this study.

The computer software package SPSS 12.0 for Windows was used to organize, compute, and analyze the data of this study to provide results of both descriptive and inferential statistics. The significance decision level for all statistical significance tests was set at  $\alpha < .01$ . Frequency distribution and descriptive analyses were performed on the basic personal background information items, the English Learning Motivation items, and the English Learning Behaviors Questionnaires items. For inferential statistics, one-way ANOVA was used to test, respectively, the significant differences in English learning motivation and in-class and outside-class English learning behaviors between the high, mid, and low achievers. Moreover, Pearson correlation was used to examine the relationship between in-class and outside-class English learning behaviors. Finally, simple regressions were performed to test, respectively, the significance of the predictive relationships between English learning motivation and in-class and outside-class English learning behaviors, and to test the significance of the effect of English achievement level on such predictive relationships.

The major findings of the study are summarized as follows. First, in general VHS students in Taiwan do not manifest strong motivation to learn English; however, higher English achievers appear to have stronger motivation than do lower achievers. Second, in general VHS students do not show enough English learning behaviors and they engage in more in-class than outside-class English learning behaviors. At the same time, higher English achievers tend to show more in-class English learning behaviors than do lower achievers, while such significant difference seems to only exist between rather high and rather low achievers when it comes to outside-class English learning behaviors. Third, there is a positive significant correlation between VHS students' in-class and outside-class English learning behaviors. Finally, VHS students' English learning motivation can be used to effectively predict their in-class as well as their outside-class English learning behaviors, regardless of their different English achievement levels.

Key words: English learning motivation, English learning strategies, English learning behaviors, English achievement, vocational high school students