

# EXPLORING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INTERCULTURAL SENSITIVITY AND LANGUAGE LEARNING MOTIVATION: A STUDY ON EFL UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS AT A VIETNAMESE UNIVERSITY

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**Abstract:** This research was conducted to investigate the relationship between intercultural sensitivity and language learning motivation among EFL undergraduate students at Hanoi University, a public higher education institution in Hanoi, Vietnam. The findings revealed a positive correlation between intercultural sensitivity and language learning motivation as EFL students had high levels of both factors, yet students seemed to lack confidence in intercultural communication. It is suggested that the teacher should communicate with EFL students about the importance of intercultural communicative competence, intercultural sensitivity, and language learning motivation. Besides, the course on intercultural sensitivity should also be embedded in the curriculum.

*Keywords:* intercultural sensitivity, language learning motivation, intercultural communicative competence, EFL, L2

## Background Information and Problem Statement

Linguistic background is considered indispensable to second language (L2) learners but cannot be sufficient to guarantee success in communicating with speakers from other cultures. Mistakes in intercultural communication due to the lack of cultural knowledge, indeed, are sometimes worse than ones in linguistic competence (Bennett, 1997). Because of a special relationship between language and culture as demonstrated by scholars (Hofstede & Bond, 1991; Ting-Toomey & Chung, 2012; Yunlong, 2014), it appears that learning a foreign language means acquiring its

culture, so good background knowledge of a specific culture might facilitate the learning process of a language, and enhance one's intercultural communicative competence consequently.

According to Chen and Starosta (1996) and Chen and Starosta (1998) there are three concepts, namely intercultural sensitivity, intercultural awareness, and intercultural communicative competence; these concepts should be separate even though they are closely related items (Chen & Starosta, 2000). While intercultural awareness refers to the cognitive aspect, intercultural sensitivity specifies the affective factor of an individual, and intercultural communicative competence

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represents the behavioral aspect, indicating that the study of intercultural communicative competence itself is a broad concept and requires different dimensions to validate relevant data (Chen & Starosta, 2000). Together with linguistic background, intercultural sensitivity may help learners enjoy differences in cultures and become competent in intercultural communication (Bennett & Bennett, 2003; Chen & Starosta, 2000). As the acquisition of cultural aspects is developed during the language learning process, sensitivity towards (inter)cultural perspectives is facilitated as well, leading EFL students to achievements of good linguistic background and intercultural sensitivity. Hence, this study focuses on the ‘intercultural sensitivity’ of EFL students at an undergraduate level in the context of a higher education institution in Vietnam, and their level of intercultural sensitivity is evaluated as a significant indicator of intercultural communicative competence.

In addition, to successfully learn and possess the essential linguistic background, L2 learners should have learning motivation. Wiseman (2002) includes motivation as an additional element in the definitions of intercultural communicative competence and the anticipation of actual engagement in communication across cultures. It reveals that the dimension of motivation is significant, which leads learners to success in language and communicative competence acquisition. Therefore, the current study also places its focus on motivation as an indicator of prospective success of L2 learners and intercultural communication.

The context of English learning in Vietnam might be different from others to some extent, but learners’ attitudes and awareness of intercultural communicative competence have been of interests among Vietnamese scholars, resulting in a range of studies carried out by researchers, such as Dao & Do (2019) and Tran & Seepho (2016). Meanwhile, little research on

motivation to learn English has been conducted, especially in association with intercultural communicative competence. Given the possible gaps in relation to the research context and research approach, findings of the existing literature may not be generalizable to the context of language learning and teaching in Vietnam.

In an attempt to explore the levels of intercultural sensitivity and language learning motivation among EFL students, and the correlation between the two variables, the present quantitative study examines the following research questions:

**Research question 1:** *What is the intercultural sensitivity level of EFL students?*

**Research question 2:** *What is the language learning motivation level of EFL students?*

**Research question 3:** *Is there any correlation between EFL students’ intercultural sensitivity and language learning motivation?*

## **Theoretical Framework**

### ***Intercultural Sensitivity***

As an affective dimension of intercultural communicative competence, intercultural sensitivity refers to a mindset developed by each individual, helping one identify any differences in others’ behaviors, perceptions, or feelings when conducting intercultural communication (Chen & Starosta, 2000). Hence, an intercultural sensitive person can not only have awareness of differences during interaction with others but also accept, appreciate and respect ideas exchanged. Emphasizing on the process of changes in one’s mindset, (Bennett, 1984) considers an individual who has intercultural sensitivity once that person possesses the ability to “transform themselves not only affectively but also cognitively and behaviorally from denial stage to integration stage in the

developmental process of intercultural communication” (p. 3). According to Chen and Starosta (2000), intercultural communicative competence is an umbrella term that encompasses the cognitive (awareness), affective (sensitivity), and behavioral (adroitness) ability of interactants in the process of intercultural communication. Chen and Starosta (2000) offer a definition of intercultural sensitivity as someone’s “ability to develop a positive emotion towards understanding and appreciating cultural differences that promote appropriate and effective behavior in intercultural communication” (p. 4). To specify what accounts for intercultural sensitivity, Chen and Starosta (2000) develop a scale consisting of six elements: self-esteem, self-monitoring, open-mindedness, empathy, interaction involvement, and non-judgment.

Self-esteem refers to the ability to “establish a sense of self-value and self-worth” (Chen & Starosta, 2000, p. 4) from one’s optimistic perspectives and confidence in interaction, resulting in that person’s positive emotion and motivation to recognize and respect any differences in cultures and situations. In other words, self-esteem can be labeled ‘interaction confidence’ as one’s and others’ cultural values can be exchanged while positive feelings can be maintained. Social psychologists Hofstede and Bond (1991) state a similar idea that once a person is aware of her/his value orientations and is exposed to another culture with positive feelings and emotions, s/he can recognize and accept it more easily. The self-esteem factor is important as it can be considered a cognitive background to self-monitoring that an individual utilize to apply behavioral adjustment, aiming to realize any situational constraints, then regulate and respond appropriately. Chen and Starosta (2000) conclude that high self-monitor speakers tend to be “more attentive, other-oriented,

and more sensitive to the expressions of their culturally different counterparts” (p. 5). The element of self-monitor, therefore, can be labeled ‘interaction attentiveness’.

The third element is open-mindedness, which refers to someone who is willing to explain him or herself and accept explanation of their counter-partners (Chen & Starosta, 2000). Therefore, those speakers become receptive to others’ needs and differences and can translate emotions into actions in intercultural communication. The fourth element is empathy, referring to empathic people concerning others’ feelings and reactions. Reynolds and Valentine (2004) also advise that it is important to know how the culture uses emotion in intercultural communication; other researchers, such as Bennett (1984), Gudykunst (1993) (as cited by Chen & Starosta, 2000), suppose the concept of empathy is “a core component” because empathic people concern others’ feelings and reactions, and tend to show “affect displays, active listening” (p. 5), so they can be labeled ‘respect for cultural differences’.

The two last elements interaction involvement and non-judgement seem to have relations, one is about action of someone (e.g. like or enjoy the communication of distinct-culture persons, or dislike it) towards people, while the other is about special quality of a speaker who is capable of sincerely listening to others whose culture is different. Johnson (2001) states that communication choices made by people could show whether they feel welcomed or valued. It is inclined that when meeting someone and talking about a topic both individuals enjoy, they can find attraction in communication and dynamically involve in interaction. On the contrary, an individual may withdraw from the communication event if it is not the case of enjoyment between the two speakers (Samovar & Porter, 1991), which might then lead to judgement – the action of hastening

in any conclusion without enough details (Chen & Starosta, 2000). Once one can be aware of the importance of non-judgment, s/he can enjoy interacting and establishing relationship with people from different cultural backgrounds (Chen & Starosta, 2000). In other words, interaction involvement represents ‘interaction enjoyment’, while non-judgement represents ‘interaction engagement’.

### ***Language Learning Motivation***

According to Dörnyei (2009), motivation “provides the primary impetus to initiate learning the L2 and later the driving force to sustain the long and often tedious learning process” (p. 117). Besides, the learning process is often lonely, difficult, and time-consuming, while success of an L2 learner depends on extent of their desire and efforts in goal achievement (Gilakjani et al., 2012). Therefore, it is widely agreed that motivation is responsible for determination of human behavior as it helps energize and give direction during their learning process (Dörnyei, 2009). Researchers and teachers seem to agree that motivation plays a significant factor as it influences degrees of rate and success of L2 learners.

Motivation seems to be key explanation to any success or failure of difficult tasks (Gardner, 2001a). It is so easy to state a learner of a foreign language can be successful with right motivation (Brown, 2000), especially within the situation that learning a foreign language is a difficult, time-consuming process (Gardner, 2001a). There are a variety of research and experiments that support the importance of motivation, especially motivation of foreign language learning. According to Dörnyei (2009), one of the focuses in teaching foreign languages is to keep learners motivated as their long-term goals may not be attained without appropriate levels of motivation despite good quality of curriculum or teaching methods.

Gardner (2001b) stated that “motivation is a central element along with language aptitude in determining success in learning another language in the classroom setting” (p. 2), which further places a significant emphasis on important roles of motivation to any learner. An individual, accordingly, who only has language aptitude might not become a successful learner, but the one whose abilities are remarkable can possibly achieve her/his goals with “sufficient motivation” (Dörnyei, 2001, p. 117). This idea was similarly argued by Gardner and Lambert (1972) when they emphasized that motivational factors can override the aptitude effect.

Generally, motivation is a push that helps one in a particular situation (Brown, 2000) regardless of her/his language aptitude. Motivation can be an internal force or personal choice of an individual, aiming to meet their needs for specific goals; in contrast, there are some external forces, which could serve as a push to learners, such as a reward for well-done results. Thanks to motivation, an L2 learner can overcome difficulties during the learning process, maintain desire for goal achievements, and embrace the situation to succeed. Probably because of its significance in second language acquisition, motivation has been concerned and supported by many studies and experiments to improve learners’ abilities and proficiencies. In this study, motivation is assumed to become a driving force that stimulates EFL students to acquire and develop their linguistic knowledge, and enhance the competence of intercultural sensitivity.

It seems that one gains success thanks to motivation regardless of his/her professions and fields. Motivation has unique attributes that concern researchers and scholars, such as Weiner (1979), Lunenburg (2011), Herzberg et al. (1959), Maslow (1970), Gawel (1996). In the context of classroom, motivation is greatly

concerned, especially between two learners, one has higher scores whereas the other does not. The situation leads to an attributional question: Why does one succeed or fail? Why does my classmate get a better mark on the exam than me? Weiner (1979) generalizes theories and ideas on such 'why' questions, one of them is "stability and affect"; it was stated "the affects of depression, apathy, and resignation were reported primarily given internal and stable attributions for failure (lack of ability, lack of typical effort, personality deficit)" (p. 14). This argument shows that there is a connection between emotions of learners and degree of their success.

In 1972, Robert Gardner and Wallace Lambert conducted research on motivation in second language learning, from which they coined the two types: *instrumental motivation* and *integrative motivation*. The instrumental side is about acquiring a language to obtain specific goals, such as advancing professions or careers, reading technical documents, having job promotion, or earning higher salary, and so forth. The integrative side, however, portrays learners who would like to integrate into a (new) culture "of a second language group and become involved in social interchange in that group" (Brown, 2000, p. 162). Accordingly, an instrumentally motivated L2 learner has pragmatic considerations such as obtaining a better job, whereas an integratively motivated learner is more interested in learning and understanding the target language's culture and people (Vaezi, 2008).

It seems an uneasy task to decide which one is more important, the instrumental motivation or the integrative motivation, because both are obviously significant to L2 learning. According to Vaezi (2008), because success of L2 learning can be foreseen, the integrative motivation is somehow considered superior to the instrumental motivation. Accordingly,

when students appreciate culture of the target language, they have dynamics to acquire and practice the language on a daily basis to learn the language and its culture. On the other hand, instrumental motivation is important and meaningful to learners who do not have much access to the L2 culture or native settings. Vaezi (2008) points out the opposition between Gardner and Lambert's research versus Dörnyei's study. The former places emphasis on the importance of integrative motivation other than instrumental motivation in a formal learning environment, whereas the latter claims that what learners could achieve for what they need is more meaningful and significant than the integrative motivation.

According to Dörnyei (2009), there are two main motivation components: intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation refers to the enjoyable engagement, which drives an individual into doing an action, whereas extrinsic motivation refers to a force that makes one take an action because there are external rewards of doing so, such as possessing a bachelor's degree, or getting promotion at work. Brown (2000) considered intrinsically motivated behaviors are aimed at bringing about "internally rewarding consequences" (p. 164), such as feelings of competence, achievement, and self-determination. Extrinsically motivated behaviors, on the other hand, are conducted with anticipation of a reward from outside (Brown, 2000), such as bonus, prizes and positive feedback.

Brown (2000) also analyzes to show the relationship between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation by arguing which one is more superior. An intrinsic motivation may be integrative motivation when one learns a foreign language for integrative purposes, whereas an extrinsic motivation becomes instrumental motivation if an individual would like to achieve external rewards. It is seemingly agreed that intrinsic motivation is more powerful than extrinsic motivation,

because one can still succeed even without existence of any external rewards. Instead, that individual strives for self-esteem and fulfilment (Brown, 2000). According to Bruner (1966, as cited by Brown, 2000), the “autonomy of self-reward” should be promoted, being free from the control of rewards and punishments is considered the most effective approach to young and adult learners.

The construct of motivation types, however, are not entirely similar, intrinsic motivation is not the same as integrative motivation, and extrinsic motivation cannot be another word for instrumental motivation.

**Table 1**

*Motivation Dichotomies*

	<b>Intrinsic</b>	<b>Extrinsic</b>
<b>Integrative</b>	L2 learner wishes to integrate with the L2 culture (e.g., for immigration or marriage)	Someone else wishes the L2 learner to know the L2 for integrative reasons (e.g., Japanese parents send kids to Japanese-language school).
<b>Instrumental</b>	L2 learner wishes to achieve goals utilizing L2 (e.g., for a career)	External power wants L2 learner to learn L2 (e.g., corporation sends Japanese businessman to U.S. for language training)

Note. From Principles of language learning and teaching (Vol. 4), by H. D. Brown, 2000, Longman.

Overall, there are four main types of motivation: instrumental motivation, integrative motivation, intrinsic motivation, and extrinsic motivation. They are somehow in common, as ones refer to L2 learners’ self-determination (integrative and intrinsic motivations) regardless of any rewards, whereas the others refer to learners’ specific achievements and purposes. Some researchers may think that the *integrative and intrinsic motivations* are superior because of their attributes to internal forces of learners and develop learners’ autonomy; nevertheless, other scholars suppose that the *instrumental and extrinsic motivations* might be more powerful as learners’ success can be anticipated. Even so, there is no doubt to affirm that motivation is crucial to any L2 learners regardless of their language aptitude. Their motivation can be

Brown (2000) highlights the difference between the intrinsic-extrinsic construct from Gardner’s integrative-instrumental orientation. For instance, one could learn a foreign language with intrinsic purposes so that future career (such as becoming an interpreter) can possibly be advanced and earn good incomes. Similarly, a prize gained from a foreign language contest can become a powerful force that develops an L2 learner’s positive affect toward speakers of a second language. Bailey (1986, as cited by Brown, 2000) produces a diagram to show the relationship between the four components of motivation.

instrumental or integrative, and then be changed into extrinsic or intrinsic.

***Studies on the Relationship Between Intercultural Communicative Competence and Motivation***

As intercultural communicative competence is important, and language learning motivation is significant to L2 learners, various studies have been conducted on the themes to offer models and new hypotheses to enhance L2 learners’ abilities. Besides, studies on the combination of both factors are also greatly concerned as the variables of the two constructs may provide educators, researchers and learners with their relationship and influences on fostering learners’ competence. One of the studies was conducted by Tsai (2012) on effects of

intercultural learning on English learning motivation among study-abroad students. Participants in this research were Asian students from China, Japan, Korean, Taiwan; the researcher utilized questionnaire as the data collection instrument. The result shows that the students had significant acquisitions from intercultural programs, resulting in their high motivation in learning English; additionally, there is a correlation between integrative and instrumental motivations, emphasizing necessities of both motivation types in encouraging L2 learners in English acquisition.

Mirzaei and Forouzandeh (2013), with an aim to measure learners' intercultural communicative competence and explore the relationship between Iranian L2 learners' intercultural communicative competence and language learning motivation, conducted a quantitative study, in consideration of gender that may influence their intercultural communicative competence development. There were 180 B.A. and M.A. English Studies participants from several Iranian universities. To collect the data, the researchers constructed an intercultural communicative competence questionnaire from Deardorff's theory. The result shows that "there was a strong, positive correlation between the L2 learners' ICC and L2-learning motivation" (Mirzaei & Forouzandeh, 2013, p. 313). Moreover, the study asserts that L2 learners' ICC levels are not affected by their gender differences.

Badrkoochi (2018) investigated the relationship between intercultural communicative competence and factors that de-motivate L2 learners. To collect the data and information, Badrkoochi adopted a scale of Chen and Starosta (2000), aiming to assess L2 learners' interaction engagement, interaction confidence, respect for cultural differences, interaction enjoyment, and interaction attentiveness. Besides, to investigate what de-motivate learners, she

used another questionnaire of 35 items of five factors: learning contents and materials, teachers' competence and teaching styles, inadequate school facilities, lack of intrinsic motivation, and test scores. Participants of the study were 60 EFL learners of intermediate level of language proficiency in a foreign language institute in Tehran. As employing a mixed method, an interview set of questions was applied to explore participants' perception of the relationship between two variables (intercultural communicative competence and demotivation). The result shows that there is a negative relationship between the two factors, and the interview data shows participants' belief in negative relationship between two variables.

As a developing nation having focus on foreign language teaching and learning, Vietnamese researchers are interested in the theme as well, resulting in various studies on the relationship between intercultural communicative competence and language learning motivation among EFL learners. The study conducted by Vu (2020) on constructivist learning and intercultural communicative competence concludes that (i) learners could acquire both linguistic and cultural knowledge to understand other English speakers with intercultural sensitivity, and (ii) there is a connected relationship between language learning motivation and intercultural communicative competence.

Obviously, there are studies conducted by international and Vietnamese scholars and researchers, showing that there has been great concern on intercultural communicative competence, and language learning motivation, especially the approaches and models to facilitate and improve quality of teaching and learning to EFL learners. The studies found offered new methods and ideas for improving students' intercultural communicative competence and their attitudes towards the competence, with or without consideration of language

learning motivation. However, the findings on levels of affective variables have not been found, and the constructs of learners' motivation to learn foreign languages have not been explored. As language learning is considered a lonely and time-consuming process (Gardner, 2001a), it is necessary to keep language learners' affective aspects at the high level. The present study, therefore, is conducted on both variables (intercultural sensitivity and motivation) to potentially contribute to the literature.

## Methods

### Research Procedures

The research was conducted at a public higher education institution in Hanoi, Vietnam. The institution has 20 faculties and departments, including the English Department (ED), which offers the four-year full-time program of English Studies in two vocational orientations: ELT and Interpreting-Translation. Upon agreement of the Dean of the English Department, Hanoi University, the researcher contacted 450 EFL students studying the second, third, and fourth years and invited them to participate in the study during the first semester of the academic year 2021-2022. To bring convenience and guarantee safety of

participants during the high period of the covid-19 pandemic, a link of e-questionnaire was designed and sent to 450 students. The questionnaire was completed by participants anonymously and submitted online. As a result, the study received 224 responses; the data collected were then analyzed with deployment of the SPSS software.

### Data Collection and Analysis

To fulfil the research purposes, the questionnaire used in the first research phase was adopted to measure the two main variables: students' *intercultural sensitivity* and their *language learning motivation*.

The questionnaire serves three purposes: (1) to evaluate intercultural sensitivity among EFL learners (to answer the first research question), (2) to assess language learning motivation (to answer the second research question), and (3) explore correlation between learners' ability of intercultural sensitivity and learning motivation (to answer the third research question). In this regard, a questionnaire consisting of two parts of a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) was adopted to serve the study purposes as follows:

**Table 2**

### Constructs of the Questionnaire

	Constructs	Items	Total
<b>Section 1</b> <b>Intercultural sensitivity</b>	Interaction engagement	1, 11, 13, 21, 22, 23, and 24	
	Respect for cultural differences	2, 7, 8, 16, 18, and 20	
	Interaction confidence	3, 4, 5, 6, and 10	24
	Interaction enjoyment	9, 12, and 15	
	Interaction attentiveness	14, 17, and 19	
<b>Section 2</b> <b>Language learning motivation</b>	Integrativeness	From 1 to 12	
	Instrumentality	From 13 to 25	25



The quantitative data collected via questionnaire survey were analyzed statistically under the guidelines of Pallant (2013). The procedure included three steps: (1) screening and cleaning the data, (2) preparing the variables for analysis, and (3) choosing and using the statistical techniques for analysis. In order to seek the proper answers to the research questions, descriptive and inferential statistics analysis were employed.

To explore the level of intercultural sensitivity and language learning motivation among EFL students, the respondents were asked to rate their level of agreement with the five-point Likert scale; in details, the highest mean score (=5) indicated the most agreeable items, and the lowest mean score (=1) indicated the least agreeable ones. Paige et al. (2003) noted the Likert scale technique score statement could indicate the degree of

**Table 4**

*Research Questions and Corresponding Analysis Techniques*

Research questions	Tools	Aim to find	Type of analysis
What is the intercultural sensitivity level of EFL students?	Questionnaire, Section 1	EFL students' ability of intercultural sensitivity	Descriptive
What is the language learning motivation level of EFL students?	Questionnaire, Section 2	EFL students' degree of language learning motivation	Descriptive
Is there any correlation between EFL students' intercultural sensitivity and language learning motivation?	Questionnaire, Sections 1 & 2	The correlation between intercultural sensitivity and language learning motivation	Descriptive and inferential analysis

**Summary of Findings**

Data from the questionnaire revealed high levels of intercultural sensitivity and language learning motivation among EFL students. Also, the correlation between intercultural sensitivity and motivation to learn English was significant and positive.

agreement. Five-point Likert scale, hence, was adapted and summarized in Table 3.

**Table 3**

*Interpretation of Five-Point Likert Scale*

Rating	Mean	Agreement level
5	4.51 – 5.00	Very high
4	3.51 – 4.50	High
3	2.51 – 3.50	Not sure
2	1.51 – 2.50	Low
1	1.00 – 1.50	Very low

*Note.* From “Culture learning in language education: A review of the literature,” R. M. Paige, H. L. Jorstad, L. Siaya, F. Klein, & J. Colby, in D. L. Lange & R. M. Paige (Vol. Eds.), & J. H. Sullivan (Series Ed.), *Culture as the core: Perspectives on culture in second language learning* (pp. 173-236), 2003, Information Age Publishing.

**Levels of Intercultural Sensitivity**

Questionnaire data showed the high level of intercultural sensitivity with the high mean scores of dimensions, including interaction engagement (3.73), respect for cultural differences (4.23), interaction enjoyment (3.68), and interaction attentiveness (3.69). Only the interaction confidence dimension was at the lowest (3.13).

**Table 5**  
*Mean Scores on Each Dimension of Intercultural Sensitivity*

Dimensions	Mean	SD	Interpretation
Interaction engagement	3.73	.37	High
Respect for cultural differences	4.23	.48	High
Interaction confidence	3.13	.56	Not sure
Interaction enjoyment	3.68	.66	High
Interaction attentiveness	3.69	.48	High
<b>Total</b>	<b>3.69</b>	<b>.51</b>	<b>High</b>

The total mean score of 3.69 for the variable of intercultural sensitivity revealed the fact that although the participants were highly sensitive to intercultural issues, they were not very confident at interacting and communicating with people from other cultural backgrounds. Even so, students were engaged with the communication, enjoyed their interaction with others, and they were attentive to the situation of intercultural communication. Students of the study highly respected differences of cultural perspectives. Amid the high levels of dimensions, the results of interaction confidence should be viewed more closely as shown in the following table:

**Table 6**  
*Descriptive Results of Interaction Confidence*

Item	Interaction Confidence	Mean	SD	Interpretation
3	I am pretty sure of myself in interacting with people from different cultures.	3.50	.721	Not sure
4	I don't find it very hard to talk in front of people from different cultures.	2.80	.956	Not sure
5	I always know what to say when interacting with people from different cultures.	2.89	.709	Not sure
6	I can be as sociable as I want to be when interacting with people from different cultures.	3.34	.909	Not sure
10	I feel confident when interacting with people from different cultures.	3.15	.758	Not sure
<b>Overall mean score</b>		<b>3.13</b>		<b>Not sure</b>

Note. M = Mean (N = 224), SD = Standard Deviation, N = Number

The factor was constructed from five items 3, 4, 5, 6, and 10, with the mean score of 3.13, which is a 'Not sure' rate, indicating a common agreement among students about the degree of confidence when interacting with individuals from other cultures. Particularly, they were not sure about the situation of meeting and interacting with culturally distinctive people (M = 2.89), or becoming sociable (M = 3.34). However, the two lowest mean scores of item 4 (M = 2.80)

and item 5 (M = 2.89) revealed that there was a high number of participants who found it hard to talk to culturally distinctive people. Hence, it is understandable when up to 54% of them were uncertain about what to say (item 5) when interacting with others from different cultures, while 29% disagreed or strongly disagreed with the item, meaning that they might find it confusing about what they should say in the given context.

**Levels of Language Learning Motivation**

Data from questionnaire showed the high level of language learning motivation with the high mean scores for both dimensions of integrativeness (4.18) and instrumentality (4.13). Accordingly, the total mean score of English learning motivation among EFL students was as high as 4.15, considered the ‘high’ level.

**Table 7**

*Mean Scores of Dimensions of ELM Scale*

<b>Dimensions</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Interpretation</b>
Integrative motivation	4.18	.50	High
Instrumental motivation	4.13	.51	High
<b>Total</b>	<b>4.15</b>	<b>.50</b>	<b>High</b>

It is worth noticing that the highest mean score for integrativeness was for the purpose of meeting and conversing with more and varied people (item 2, M = 4.59).

**Table 8**

*Descriptive Results of Integrative Motivation*

<b>Item</b>	<b>I study English ...</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Label</b>
1	to be more at ease with other people who speak English	4.58	.593	Very high
2	to meet and converse with more and varied people	4.59	.600	Very high
3	to better understand and appreciate English art and literature	4.40	.726	High
4	to participate more freely in the activities of other cultural groups	4.39	.756	High
5	to know the life of the English-speaking nations	4.37	.741	High
6	to understand English pop music	4.00	.876	High
7	The more I get to know native English speakers, the more I like them	3.86	.849	High
8	to know various cultures and peoples	4.39	.674	High
9	to keep in touch with foreign friends and acquaintances	4.20	.752	High
10	to know more about native English speakers	4.22	.754	High
11	The British are kind and friendly	3.59	.775	High
12	The Americans are kind and cheerful	3.62	.754	High
<b>Overall mean score</b>		<b>4.18</b>		<b>High</b>

Note. M = Mean (N = 224), SD = Standard Deviation, N = Number

Meanwhile, the highest mean score for instrumentality was for the purpose of

future career (item 13, M = 4.65).

**Table 9**

*Descriptive Results of Instrumental Motivation*

<b>Item</b>	<b>Items: I study English because ...</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>Label</b>
13	I'll need it for my future career	4.65	.609	Very high
14	it will make me a more knowledgeable person	4.48	.669	High
15	it will someday be useful in getting a good job	4.61	.604	Very high

Item	Items: I study English because ...	M	SD	Label
16	other people will respect me more if I know English	3.62	1.004	High
17	I will be able to search for information and materials in English on the Internet	4.53	.627	Very high
18	I will learn more about what's happening in the world	4.33	.702	High
19	language learning often gives me a feeling of success	3.95	.851	High
20	language learning often makes me happy	3.99	.836	High
21	an educated person is supposed to be able to speak English	3.41	1.125	Not sure
22	I can understand English-speaking films, videos, TV or radio	4.38	.658	High
23	I can read English book	4.33	.696	High
24	to know new people from different parts of the world	4.34	.644	High
25	without it one cannot be successful in any field	3.12	1.192	Not sure
<b>Overall mean score</b>		<b>4.13</b>		<b>High</b>

Note. M = Mean (N = 224), SD = Standard Deviation, N = Number

**Correlation Between Intercultural Sensitivity and Language Learning Motivation**

Based on the results of Pearson correlation, it was found that intercultural sensitivity and English learning motivation were positively correlated ( $p = 0.00$ ). In addition, there were significant relations between dimensions of intercultural sensitivity and ones of English learning motivation, especially the strong correlation between: (a) interaction engagement and integrative-instrumental motivation ( $r = .278$ ,  $r = .214$ ); (b) interaction attentiveness and integrative-instrumental motivation ( $r = .246$ ,  $r = .239$ ); and (c) intercultural confidence and integrative-instrumental motivation ( $r = .214$ ,  $r = .152$ ). This means that EFL students with high sensitivity to intercultural communication are highly motivated to learn English, and vice versa. In other words, those who possess a high level of instrumental motivation and integrative motivation can possibly be sensitive to intercultural interaction and they can (a) enjoy engagement in interacting with others, (b) pay attention to obtain

information while conversing with others, (c) show personal confidence at communicating with others, (d) show their respect to cultural differences, and (e) show their positive and enthusiastic feelings.

**Table 10**  
*Pearson Correlation Between Intercultural Sensitivity and Learning Motivation*

		Language learning motivation
<b>Intercultural sensitivity</b>	Pearson Correlation	.272**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000
	N	224

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

When condensing the data into two categories, it reveals that intercultural sensitivity and language learning motivation were significantly and positively correlated ( $r = .272$ ,  $p = 0.00$ ). This means that students with high competence in intercultural

sensitivity are more motivated to learn English, and vice versa.

### **Discussion and Conclusion**

The level of intercultural sensitivity among EFL students should necessarily be evaluated as cultural background and intercultural sensitivity can be acquired and developed during the language learning process. Furthermore, the degree of motivation should also be assessed since positiveness can be maintained during the process of English learning, resulting in achievements in competence of both linguistics and intercultural sensitivity. The study, therefore, explores the topic and yields several essential findings.

First, the EFL students of the study generally have a high level of intercultural sensitivity, yet they seem to lack confidence necessary to conduct intercultural communication. As the data revealed, EFL students are confused about what to discuss with culturally distinct people, unsure of themselves in interaction with others, and not sure about their confidence in the context of intercultural communication, resulting in the fact that they find it challenging to communicate with others. According to Deardorff (2014), intercultural sensitivity is not an in-born ability but requires training programs that could equip L2 learners with necessary cultural knowledge, competence and skills so that their interaction confidence can be improved. With confidence in intercultural interaction, EFL students can also “deal with the feeling of alienation, frustration, and stress caused by the ambiguous situation in the process of intercultural communication” (Chen & Starosta, 2000, p. 4). Accordingly, they may increase the degrees of other dimensions of intercultural sensitivity, such as the feelings of being more engaged, more pleasantly enjoying while conversing, being more attentive towards intercultural communication

circumstances, and having further respect for cultural differences.

Second, the EFL students of the study generally have a high level of language learning motivation, with the high levels of instrumental motivation, integrative motivation, and their positive attitudes and interests in native culture and community. The gap between EFL students’ levels of integrativeness versus degrees of instrumentality is inconsiderable. The instrumental motivation represents students’ concern for prospective employment opportunities, while integrative motivation represents students’ desire to meet and communicate with people from various cultural backgrounds. More noticeably, EFL students consider that their learning of English can bring them ease and feelings of being comfortable at communicating with others who speak English, indicating evidence of integrative motivation. Obviously, when L2 learners have instrumental and integrative motivation, coupled with positive attitudes toward the learning situation, their language achievement could be obtained consequently (Gardner, 2001b).

Third, the correlation between intercultural sensitivity and language learning motivation is significant and positively related, which was in line with an initial assumption of the study. It means that the higher level an individual’s motivation is, the higher degree that person’s intercultural sensitivity will be. It, in that case, can be anticipated that one can enjoy interacting with culturally distinct people with their positive feelings, attention, personal confidence and respect to cultural differences. Also, one who has high sensitivity towards intercultural communication can be motivated to learn English thanks to her/his strong instrumentality and integrativeness. An individual who is demotivated to learn a second language may experience less communication with other

cultures and might learn less about the cultural norms of the target community (Badrkoohi, 2018). Therefore, the high level of intercultural sensitivity seems to be an impetus to drive one's motivation to a higher level. The current study shows the positive relationship between intercultural sensitivity and language learning motivation, which can also explain the willingness to communication of an L2 learner. Lack of motivation would be related to a lack of willingness to communicate, which then consequently leads to the lack of intercultural competence (Badrkoohi, 2018). Thus, intercultural sensitivity is positively related to language learning motivation; motivation can have positive associations with intercultural sensitivity, and willingness of an EFL student to communicate in a culturally distinct context can be anticipated from the degree of motivation.

Fourth, the findings of the study reveal that the contemporary training programs delivered to EFL students have been effective as their sensitivity to intercultural communication can be enhanced within the language learning process. However, 'interaction confidence' seems to be EFL students' weakness probably because of limited real-life experiences. It is suggested that teachers should communicate with their students about the importance of intercultural communicative competence, intercultural sensitivity, and language learning motivation which could help increase their performances during and after the program. In addition, more practices should be provided so that students could gain experiential lessons. With the pressure of assignments and academic evaluations, students might have the impetus to improve their skills and competence. This suggestion aligns with a recommendation of Deardorff (2014), stating that intercultural competence should be intentionally addressed

throughout the curriculum and experiential learning. In other words, intercultural sensitivity should be embedded in the teaching and learning programs, aiming to increase motivation to learn English, leading to higher levels of intercultural communicative competence, and boosting students' confidence in intercultural communication context.

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### Appendix 2: The Questionnaire

Dear Student,

Thank you for your participation in the Survey on Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) and Language Learning Motivation (LLM) of EFL Students.

The questionnaire has two sections: Section 1 - Intercultural Communicative Competence Scale (24 questions), and Section 2 - Language Learning Motivation Scale (25 questions). These questions will take about 10 minutes to complete. The survey is anonymous, your name is not required; hence, no one will be able to identify you or your answers and no one will know whether or not you participated in the study. Please note that no one will be personally identified when the results of the survey are reported.

Your participation in this study is voluntary (your choice). By completing the questionnaire, you are voluntarily agreeing to participate. You are free to decline to answer any particular question you do not wish to answer for any reason. If you have any questions or concerns about the research study or this questionnaire, please contact Huyen Nguyen on +84-978-466-689 or by email [huyenhtqt@hanu.edu.vn](mailto:huyenhtqt@hanu.edu.vn).

Thank you very much.

Hanoi, September 2021.

#### Section 1

#### Intercultural Communicative Competence Scale

*Adopted from the Scale developed and validated by Chen and Starosta (2000)*

Below is a series of statements concerning intercultural communication. There are no right or wrong answers. Please work quickly and record your first impression by indicating the degree to which you agree or disagree with the statement. Thank you for your cooperation.

	Statements	Strongly agree (5)	Agree (4)	Uncertain (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly disagree (1)
1	I enjoy interacting with people from different cultures.					
2	I think people from other cultures are narrow-minded.					
3	I am pretty sure of myself in interacting with people from different cultures.					



	<b>Statements</b>	<b>Strongly agree (5)</b>	<b>Agree (4)</b>	<b>Uncertain (3)</b>	<b>Disagree (2)</b>	<b>Strongly disagree (1)</b>
4	I find it very hard to talk in front of people from different cultures.					
5	I always know what to say when interacting with people from different cultures.					
6	I can be as sociable as I want to be when interacting with people from different cultures.					
7	I don't like to be with people from different cultures.					
8	I respect the values of people from different cultures.					
9	I get upset easily when interacting with people from different cultures.					
10	I feel confident when interacting with people from different cultures.					
11	I tend to wait before forming an impression of culturally-distinct counterparts.					
12	I often get discouraged when I am with people from different cultures.					
13	I am open-minded to people from different cultures.					
14	I am very observant when interacting with people from different cultures.					
15	I often feel useless when interacting with people from different cultures.					
16	I respect the ways people from different cultures behave.					
17	I try to obtain as much information as I can when interacting with people from different cultures.					
18	I would not accept the opinions of people from different cultures.					

Statements		Strongly agree (5)	Agree (4)	Uncertain (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly disagree (1)
19	I am sensitive to my culturally distinct counterpart's subtle meanings during our interaction.					
20	I think my culture is better than other cultures.					
21	I often give positive responses to my culturally different counterpart during our interaction					
22	I avoid those situations where I will have to deal with culturally-distinct persons.					
23	I often show my culturally-distinct counterpart my understanding through verbal or nonverbal cues.					
24	I have a feeling of enjoyment towards differences between my culturally-distinct counterpart and me.					

*Note.* Items 2, 4, 7, 9, 12, 15, 18, 20, and 22 are reverse coded before summing the 24 items. Interaction Engagement items are 1, 11, 13, 21, 22, 23, and 24, Respect for Cultural Differences items are 2, 7, 8, 16, 18, and 20, Interactional Confidence items are 3, 4, 5, 6, and 10, Interaction Enjoyment items are 9, 12, and 15, and Interaction Attentiveness items are 14, 17, and 19.

## Section 2

### English-Learning Motivation Scale

*Adopted from the Survey Questionnaire by Vaezi (2008)*

Below are a number of statements with which some people agree and others disagree. We would like you to indicate your opinion about each statement by ticking the boxes below which best indicates the extent to which you disagree or agree with that statement.

Statements		Strongly agree (5)	Agree (4)	Uncertain (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly disagree (1)
1	Studying English can be important to me because it will allow me to be more at ease with other people who speak English.					
2	Studying English can be important to me because it will allow me to meet and converse					

	<b>Statements</b>	<b>Strongly agree (5)</b>	<b>Agree (4)</b>	<b>Uncertain (3)</b>	<b>Disagree (2)</b>	<b>Strongly disagree (1)</b>
	with more and varied people.					
3	Studying English can be important for me because it will enable me to better understand and appreciate English art and literature.					
4	Studying English can be important to me because I will be able to participate more freely in the activities of other cultural groups.					
5	It is important for me to know English in order to know the life of the English-speaking nations.					
6	Studying English is so important to me so that I can understand English pop music.					
7	The more I get to know native English speakers, the more I like them.					
8	Studying English is important to me so that I can know various cultures and peoples.					
9	Studying English is important to me so that I can keep in touch with foreign friends and acquaintances.					
10	I would like to know more about native English speakers.					
11	The British are kind and friendly.					
12	The Americans are kind and cheerful.					
13	Studying English can be important for me because I'll need it for my future career.					
14	Studying English can be important for me because it will make me a more knowledgeable person.					

	<b>Statements</b>	<b>Strongly agree (5)</b>	<b>Agree (4)</b>	<b>Uncertain (3)</b>	<b>Disagree (2)</b>	<b>Strongly disagree (1)</b>
15	Studying English can be important for me because it will someday be useful in getting a good job.					
16	Studying English can be important for me because other people will respect me more if I know English.					
17	Studying English can be important for me because I will be able to search for information and materials in English on the Internet.					
18	Studying English can be important for me because I will learn more about what's happening in the world.					
19	Studying English can be important for me because language learning often gives me a feeling of success.					
20	Studying English can be important for me because language learning makes me happy.					
21	Studying English can be important to me because an educated person is supposed to be able to speak English.					
22	Studying English is important to me so that I can understand English-speaking films, videos, TV or radio.					
23	Studying English is important to me so that I can read English books.					
24	Studying English is important to me because it will enable me to get to know new people from different parts of the world.					

	Statements	Strongly agree (5)	Agree (4)	Uncertain (3)	Disagree (2)	Strongly disagree (1)
25	Studying English is important to me because without it, one cannot be successful in any field.					

**Thank you for your contribution.**

## KHÁM PHÁ MỐI QUAN HỆ GIỮA ĐỘ NHẠY LIÊN VĂN HÓA VÀ ĐỘNG LỰC HỌC NGOẠI NGỮ: NGHIÊN CỨU ĐỐI VỚI SINH VIÊN CHÍNH QUY NGÀNH NGÔN NGỮ ANH TẠI MỘT TRƯỜNG ĐẠI HỌC Ở VIỆT NAM

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**Tóm tắt:** Nghiên cứu này thực hiện để điều tra mối quan hệ giữa độ nhạy liên văn hóa và động lực học ngoại ngữ đối với sinh viên chính quy ngành Ngôn ngữ Anh tại Trường Đại học Hà Nội, là cơ sở giáo dục đại học công lập tại Hà Nội, Việt Nam. Kết quả nghiên cứu thể hiện mối tương quan dương giữa độ nhạy liên văn hóa và động lực học ngoại ngữ bởi sinh viên Ngôn ngữ Anh đều đạt mức cao đối với hai yếu tố này; tuy vậy, dường như các sinh viên thiếu sự tự tin trong giao tiếp liên văn hóa. Nghiên cứu gợi ý các thầy, cô nên chia sẻ với sinh viên Ngôn ngữ Anh về tầm quan trọng của năng lực giao tiếp liên văn hóa, độ nhạy liên văn hóa, và động lực học ngoại ngữ. Bên cạnh đó, chương trình giảng dạy nên tích hợp môn độ nhạy liên văn hóa.

*Từ khóa:* độ nhạy liên văn hóa, động lực học ngoại ngữ, năng lực giao tiếp liên văn hóa, tiếng Anh như Ngoại ngữ (EFL), ngôn ngữ thứ hai (L2)