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Topic Interest and Goal Orientation: An Investigation on Middle School EFL Students in Vietnam

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This paper reports a study investigating the relationship between students' levels of topic interest and their goal orientations in EFL learning. Two scales adopted from the literature related to mastery and performance goal orientations and 42 popular topics used currently in different textbooks were given to 834 9th Grade Vietnamese students for the sampling. As a result of the research, topic interest was identified as being more strongly correlated with mastery goals than with performance goals. Further analyses of the relationships between these two constructs provided insightful understandings for topical textbook design, goal enhancement incentives, and their interactions in ESL learning.

Key words: EFL learning in Vietnam, goal orientation, topic-based textbooks, topic interest

INTRODUCTION

Research studies have considered interests and goals as two crucial motivational factors which greatly influence on ESL learners' academic performance (Hidi & Harackiewicz, 2000; Tobias, 1994). Both of them are formed and influenced by social, familial, and individual situations during the

development of each student. Once constructed, they in turn have effects on student behaviors in learning English, and may provide the underlying motivation for them to achieve different levels of success. Interests and goals may also be changed or even reformed as learning takes place. Therefore, bringing about a better understanding of these two variables would contribute to our understanding of motivation generally and to the role that motivation plays in the development of textbooks and syllabi specifically.

In addition, although influences of topic interest and goal orientation on learning have been separately investigated, the interactive relationship between them which, it has been suggested, have different interactive effects is not well documented. Moreover, many of the topic interest-related studies have changed their focus over time because the hypothesized underlying construct has gone from being defined as a particular form of situational interest in the 1980s, to a form of individual interest in the 1990s, and to a construct covering both types of interest in recent years. These issues, i.e. the lack of a focus on topic interest and goal orientation, have also been implicated as a major cause of students' poor performance in English at the high school level.

INTEREST

Interest has been shown to be a critical variable even at the beginning stages of research on the topic (e.g., Kintsch, 1980; Schiefele, Krapp, & Winteler, 1992). It varies tremendously from intrinsic motivation, subject-related effect, and attitude to cognitive motivation, curiosity or liking (Schiefele *et al.*, 1992). However, soon after those initial studies, a number of researchers (e.g., Albin, Benton, & Kharamtsova, 1996; Hidi, 1990; Renninger, 1992; Schraw, 2000) began to systematically and empirically explore its roles in classroom learning. Regarding the relationship between interest and learning, researchers define interest as a psychological state resulting from an interactive relation between a learner's individual and situational aspects of

surroundings (Krapp, Hidi, & Renninger, 1992). It therefore has both cognitive and affective components (Krapp, 1999; Krapp *et al.*, 1992).

Previous studies have categorized interest into *personal (individual)* and *situational* types. As its name indicates, the first type results from personal characteristics; it thus develops slowly, is relatively stable over time toward a certain topic or domain, and is influenced by degrees of knowledge, values and positive feelings (Renninger, 1990, 1998). In contrast, the situational type results from environmental factors; it emerges suddenly, is more immediate, and may not last beyond the time it is triggered (Hidi, 1990; Hidi & Anderson, 1992; Murphy & Alexander, 2000). To highlight the roles of topic and text, Schiefele (1996) further investigated the classification features and uses the terms *topic interest* and *text-based interest* to refer to personal and situational interest respectively. In this sense, topic interest is also understood as a special form of personal interest. It is the evaluative predisposition toward topics, while personal interest refers to domains of knowledge, material objects and activities. Text-based interest, on the other hand, is defined as an emotional state aroused by particular text characteristics (Schiefele, 1996).

For example, a child is just interested in reading about the beautiful world in *fairy tales* since his first reading lessons. He tends to take this text when choices are given. One day, he goes home and sees only *gardening books*. All of his family members are reading them very attentively. Suddenly, he feels curious and starts reading a text that was not among his favourite. His preference on gardening texts may not last for long, but it is clearly shaped by particular text contents in specific environment.

Realizing important roles of topic interest in learning, researchers have reexamined its special conceptualization. As a result, they have separated it as an independent entry beside personal and situational interest (Ainley, Hidi, & Berndorff, 2002). This usage systematically corresponds to what Jetton and Alexander (2001) suggested a year before. *Topic interest* is then conceived of as a degree of interest that is elicited when a particular topic is presented. It therefore has impacts of both personal and situational interest

(Ainley & Hidi, 2002). Despite the interconnectedness of the three types of interest, interaction between them has not been well-documented (Schiefele, 1998), and it is the reason that many suggested reconsiderations on the issue have been discussed (Jetton & Alexander, 2001; Renninger, Hidi, & Krapp, 1992; Schiefele, 1998).

Individual Interest

Individual interest is referred to as one of the characteristics of an individual's nature, an innate psychological state (Ainley *et al*., 2000a). Therefore, each individual tends to favour some specific kind of information or knowledge domain and learn more from it than those without such interest (e.g., Ainley, 1998; Nenniger, 1987; Renninger, 1990). For instance, a scientist with an individual interest in natural sciences looks for opportunities to engage with this subject through work and play. As a result, s/he gains more knowledge from those domains than those who do not share her interest. These stable individual interests on certain topics greatly determine learners' attention, recognition, and memory (Renninger & Wozniak, 1985). Therefore, it becomes a good predictor of academic motivation and learning (Schiefele, Krapp, & Winteler, 1992).

Situational Interest

Situational interest is defined as a psychological state where stimuli from the environment contribute positively or negatively to an individual's level of interest. Also, the feelings, emotions and reactions developed in those contexts may be maintained or lost. This temporary distinction of situational interest plays an important role in learning (Hidi & Anderson, 1992), specifically for those who do not have individual interest in the important academic areas in advance (Hidi, 1990; Hidi & Anderson, 1992; Hidi & Harackiewicz, 2000). From this perspective, an interesting set of texts can be the main source to trigger this type of interest, and excellent presentation of

these texts could result in an increased degree of interest overall.

As texts are the decisive factor in determining the level of situational interest, some researchers (e.g., Hidi & Baird, 1988; Schiefele, 1996) have called it text-based interest. Characteristics of a text such as novelty, intensity, and complexity have strong influences on each individual's motivational state and may override or reconfigure the features of the existing personal interest (Hidi & Anderson, 1992). Therefore, texts of interest can be shown to be positively related to comprehension and recall test results (Wade, Buxton, & Kelly, 1999). However, they are not associated with liking or positive emotions (Iran-Nejad, 1987).

Harp and Mayer (1997) have indicated in a study that interesting texts enhance situational interest and superior performance on reading comprehension and recall tests. These emphasize the importance of teaching material contents and situation modifications in teaching contexts (Hidi & Berndorff, 1998). In addition, high-interest texts enable learners to create more connections among different parts of the materials, prior knowledge and personal experience. Nonetheless, the development, nurture, and use of this interest resource for educational purposes has not been thoroughly identified (Hidi & Harackiewicz, 2000).

Topic Interest

A *topic* is defined as a "coherent knowledge domain of subject matter" such as "space travel" or "wildlife" (Schiefele, 1992). Topics have much less abstract generalizations than themes. *Themes* therefore cover a cross range of specific topics. For example, "future" and "survival" can be considered as themes for the two aforementioned topics respectively. *Topic interest* refers to the contributions that a word, a phrase or an idea provoked by a group of words provide to the human psychological state. This is the most crucial in language teaching and learning because topics are the main source of any communicative activity in classroom. Conceptually, it has a dominant role over individual and situational interests because it covers many respects from

those two types.

The term *topic interest* could be considered to have been first initiated from a study conducted by Hidi and McLaren (1987). Subjects in the study were asked to rate their interest in studying and writing about various topics and themes in social science textbooks. At that time, the notion of topic interest was not fully-conceptualized. As a result, these two researchers considered students' responses as situational interest because most fourth or fifth graders do not have individual interests in such topics and themes, they argued. Also, students' judgments in the study are anticipatory, and therefore elicited purely from situational interest. This is contradictory to the literature which indicates that a child may have specific individual interests in some domains, and this type of interest plays a role in students' responses to such a task.

In some other studies (e.g., Schiefele, 1996, 1998), topic interest is considered a special form of individual interest. It is used to refer to a relatively long-term orientation toward particular topics. Subjects were asked to rate how they felt (ranging from "stimulated, engaged, bored, to interested") when reading about topics and how they valued (ranging from "meaningful, useful, to worthless") the knowledge of each given topic. The results showed that these two variables are strongly correlated, i.e., people are more interested in what they think is more important. However, the subjects' judgments on the importance of and interest in a topic may involve factors from prior knowledge and experience (Renninger, 1990) or those of a specific environment such as professions and life themes (Hidi, 1990). Thus, it is misleading to conclude that topic interest is purely a type of individual interest.

In 2000, Ainley *et al.* (2002) reexamined the construct of topic interest and distinguished it from the other two in a well-designed study. Topic interest is conceived of as a psychological status triggered by certain topics and possesses components of both individual and situational interests. In this study, subjects' individual interest was measured by their online ratings of understanding and valuing five domains that students often deal with in their

textbooks (“personal health, animals and pets, TV and movies, science, and popular music”). Topic interest was investigated by having students rate how interesting they expected each of the five titles to be, using a Likert scale. The other type, situational interest, was assessed by analyzing the variations that each topic title contributed to the levels of students’ topic interest. Results strongly support this classification with significant correlations between individual and topic interest as well as the influence of situational interest (triggered by different texts) on the levels of topic interest.

In brief, Figure 1 provides a graphical summary of how the concept of topic interest, as it relates to situational and individual interests, has developed over time.

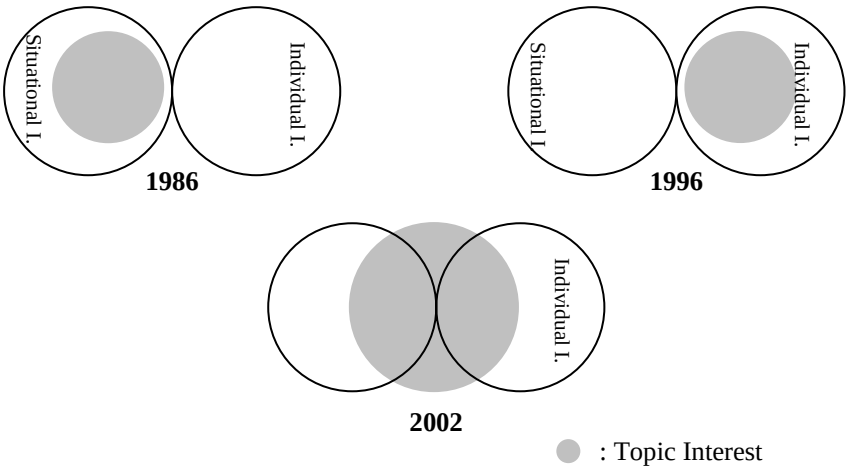

FIGURE 1
The Development of Topic Interest Conceptualization

GOALS

Goals are defined as beliefs and behaviors that represent learning aims

(Ames, 1992; Pintrich & Schunk, 1996). Therefore, they impact individuals' approach to, engagement with and response toward tasks (Dweck & Leggett, 1988; Nicholls, 1990). They are classified according to the distinction of achievement purposes: *mastery* goals and *performance* goals (Ames, 1992), i.e., many students may have different reasons for completing a task despite being equally motivated. This conceptualization provides a clear-cut framework for research studies. Although some researchers have claimed that goal-avoidance (e.g., Elliot, 1999; Elliot & Church, 1997; Elliot & Harackiewicz, 1996) and later divided into mastery avoidance and performance avoidance (Elliot & McGregor, 2001) should be added to the categories of this construct, these frameworks have not been widely researched and have not received significant recognition. Therefore, in this paper only the global distinction of mastery and performance goal orientations and their relationships with topic interests are emphasized.

The first type, mastery goals or competence goals, orients people to develop new skills, understanding, and ability (Nicholls, 1984). They are also called learning-oriented (Elliott & Dweck, 1988) or task-oriented goals (Nicholls, 1984). This kind of goal orientation refers to the focus of attention on the task rather than any extrinsic reward (Nicholls *et al.*, 1989). Learners of this type show strong persistence on difficult tasks and consider great effort and risk-taking a source of success. In other words, they are intrinsically motivated and concerned more with developing skills, understanding, solving problems, and accomplishing a task than with getting a good grade.

In comparison, performance goals, also-called perception of competence goals (Nicholls, 1984), drive learners to demonstrate high capability with the hope of obtaining better public evaluation. They are also called performance-oriented (Dweck & Elliot, 1983), ability-focused (Ames & Ames, 1984), or ego-oriented goals (Nicholls, 1984). This type of goal drives students to establish the superiority of their ability relative to that of their peers. They consider ability, not efforts, the reason for success. Thus, they try to outperform others and use norm-referenced standards (instead of self-referenced standards of the other type) in judging success (Hidi &

Harackiewicz, 2000). In this study, the terms mastery and performance goals are adopted.

Relationships Between Mastery Goals and Performance Goals

The relationships between mastery and performance goals are suggested to be "orthogonal and not simply opposite ends of a continuum" (Anderman & Maehr, 1994, p. 295). Although the classified influences on goal adoptions come from opposite directions, it is possible for them to overlap. A goal adoption of one type may involve the impact of factors constituting that of the other. Causes such as task complexity or time constraint could drive a mastery oriented individual into a performance oriented adopter. Besides, a student dominated with mastery goals also may obtain a similarly high level of performance goals under special circumstances such as in an entrance examination or a competitive contest. In contrast, those who are more performance goal oriented may also achieve a very high level of mastery goals if they are dealing with something very interesting and worth understanding.

Factors that drive each individual toward one category rather than the other are still a question open to researchers. Obviously, personal characteristics such as experience, achievement history, and parental beliefs contribute significantly to shape this (Hidi & Harackiewicz, 2000; Wentzel, 1991). Moreover, classroom structural characteristics lead to changes of achievement orientations and adoption of goals (Ames, 1992). Diversified tasks that aim at developing combined skills are more likely to facilitate mastery orientation (Nicholls, 1990). The meaningful reasons for engaging in an activity also contribute significantly to the levels of mastery goals. In addition, classroom evaluation and recognition practices such as standards, criteria, and methods as well as the frequency and the content of evaluation are identified as associating students with different goal orientations (Ames & Ames, 1984).

TOPIC INTEREST AND GOAL ORIENTATIONS

Examining the literature on goals and interests, Murphy and Alexander (2000) advocated that a bilateral relationship should exist as their constructs are related. However, there have not been many studies directly addressing this kind of issue.

Many theorists and researchers use intrinsic motivation, the enjoyment for and interest in an activity (Hidi, 2001), as a linking variable between goals and interests (or topic interest in education in particular). Theorists suggested that performance goals can either enhance or threaten intrinsic motivation depending on the positive performance result (Rawsthorne & Elliot, 1999; Tauer & Harackiewicz, 1999) or evaluative pressure and anxiety (Nicholls, 1989; Ryan & Stiller, 1991). Both of these two directions affect the changes in interest. Some others suggested that both types of goals can promote interest, but that there are differences across personalities and contexts. With high achievement oriented learners, performance goals enhance intrinsic motivation whereas with low achievement oriented individuals or in neutral contexts, mastery goals provide goal enhancement (Barron & Harakiewicz, 2001; Harackiewicz & Elliot, 1998).

Other studies have attempted to assess the direction of these two constructs. On the one hand, interest is identified as the predictor of goal adoption. Students who are not interested in a topic will not want to learn much about it; therefore, they adopt performance goals when they are assigned to do it. In contrast, students who have individual interest in a topic will want to learn more about it; therefore, they adopt mastery goals (Alexander, 1997; Meece *et al*., 1988; Pintrich *et al*., 1998). However, it is necessary to reexamine this relationship as the construct of individual interest in a topic is different from the modern construct of topic interest which is defined as not a special form of either individual or situational interests.

On the other hand, goals are suggested to enhance interest[1] (Harackiewicz

[1] The construct of interest at that time was also used to refer to topic interest which was not well researched. The old literature often used these two terms interchangeably.

& Sansone, 1991; Heyman & Dweck, 1992; Krapp, 1999). Mastery goals help students to perform well in an activity. After the task is acquired successfully, performance goals are automatically achieved, and interest is enhanced (Zimmerman & Kitsantas, 1997). Each type of goals plays a significant role at different phases in a task acquisition process. Besides, a combination of performance and mastery goals has been found to have stronger effects on interest than each of them alone (Barron & Harakiewicz, 2001).

Whatever the decisive factor is, the relationship between mastery goals and interest is agreed to be positive (Ames & Archer, 1988; Archer, 1994; Harackiewicz *et al.*, 2000; Pintrich *et al.*, 1998). The higher degree of mastery goal a person has toward a topic, the more interested in that topic s/he is. On the contrary, when s/he does not have interest in a topic, the chance that s/he obtains mastery goals for that topic is very small. Nonetheless, performance goals have not been investigated in such a condition. This relationship is described graphically in Figure 2.

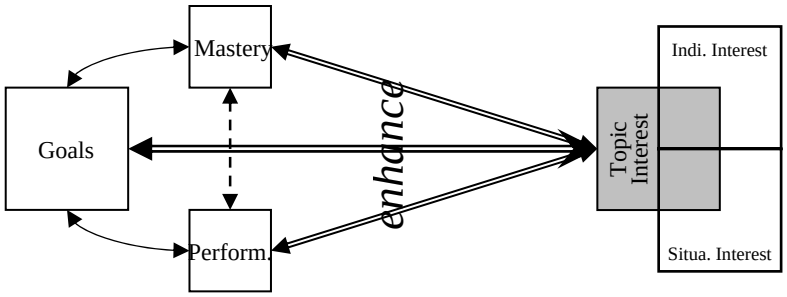

FIGURE 2
Relationships Between Topic Interest and Goal Orientation

Prior identification of this relationship provides different perspectives to tackle the issue. However, most of them only focus on the adoptions or changes of goal orientations within a very limited set of specific topics or

activities. In another words, each operating set of goal adoptions is measured in relation to each interest unit of topic or activity. Studies have not addressed the issue from a wider perspective, i.e., the general learning goal orientations as a whole and a bigger coverage of topic set to respond to the number of topics that students often deal with in class. To fill this gap, this study is designed to address the two variables independently, reconfirming the relationships between topic interest and each type of goal orientation.

In brief, the history of topic interest indicates many significant changes in examining this construct. It moves from being defined as a particular form of situational interest, to a form of individual interest, and then changes to a construct lying in the middle. Hence, it is necessary to reinvestigate its relationship with other learning variables, especially when the term topic interest is often used to refer to the interest in general. New investigations using new construct classifications based on the modern literature need to reconsider a range of prior research. Accordingly, the relationship between topic interest and goal orientations also needs to be considered; whether topic interest is positively correlated with only one type of goal orientation or both of them. If both of them play a role in determining the level of topic interest, the different patterns of interest that they participate to create also need to be examined.

THE PRESENT STUDY

Research Questions

The study is firstly to investigate ESL students' topic interest across a range of specific topics. After that, students' goal orientation is examined; and the relationships between topic interest and each type of goal orientation are researched. It is expected that topic interest will correlate significantly with both mastery and performance goals, i.e., the higher the level of topic interest that a student has, the higher the level of goal that s/he seeks to obtain

or vice versa. Other investigations on gender and socio-economic factors are not reported in this paper.

Subject Recruitment

The subjects of the study are 834 ninth grade students (381 males and 453 females) in eight public lower secondary schools in Vietnam. These students are between fourteen to fifteen years old and take English as a compulsory subject in the school curriculum just as any other student in the regular national high school system would.

Measurements

This study employed a survey, consisting of two main parts. Participants were expected to answer all the questions included in the survey. The first part was to collect information about students' goals in EFL classes. The second part asked students about their levels of interest in a number of topics often found in their school English textbooks as well as some other topics that are potentially interesting to students aged 14 or 15. Each variable was assessed as indicated in the following sections.

Topic Interest Measures

A list of forty two topics was compiled from the present English textbooks used in Vietnam such as *English 6*, *7*, *8*, *9*, *10*, *11* and *12* and other commercial course books of similar level which are popularly used in foreign language centers. The topics chosen range from *Sports* (such as football, cricket, badminton), *Entertainment* (such as movies, theatre, television programs), *Special Occasions and Public Holidays* (such as May Day, New Year, Independence Day) to *General Social Issues* (such as stress, healthcare, divorce). As a result of this process of expanding, combining, and paring the aforementioned available resources and then considering other aspects of the

local contexts such as cultural issues, appropriate behaviours, geographical characteristics, and students' level of knowledge, a list of topics was generated (see Appendix).

Following the construct proposed by Ainley and her colleagues (2002), this study employed a self-report rating-scale system. When the survey was distributed to the class, participants were expected to examine those topics given in their current English textbook and rate each of them, using a five-point Likert scale, ranging from "not interesting at all" (one point) to "very interesting" (five points). Each topic is composed of a short phrase of up to four content words. Some unfamiliar or unclear topics were accompanied with more specific details written in brackets. The scores for each of these topic ratings were added together to give students a topic interest score, which determined their level of interest in each of the specific topics presented. Statistical analyses used the scores of each item and the total scores to interpret the collected data.

This method of topic selection was devised directly from the construct of topic proposed by Schiefele (1992). It is also similar to those used in Hidi and McLaren (1987) where the topic resources from several social science textbooks in Ontario were examined. However, it differs from those studies which equate titles of reading passages to topics (e.g., Ainley *et al*., 2002; Flowerday *et al.*, 2004) or from those in which participants have to work out the topics themselves while reading a passage (e.g., Abu-Rabia, 1996; Schiefele, 1996; Schiefele & Skrapp, 1996). Titles of passages such as *Mississippi freedom school: Alternative schools from the past suggest a lesson for the future, Winter depression: A case of being SAD; recent research study finds connections between weather and depression* (in Flowerday *et al.*, 2004) or *X-ray, Star Trek/X-Files* (in Ainley *et al*., 2002) are either too specific or too detailed to be appropriately defined as topics. Likewise, when students have to work out the topic of a passage while reading it, it is possible that they will not provide the same responses because people read, understand, and interpret texts differently. That is to say, text styles and manner of presentation may either facilitate, enhance or reduce

readers' level of interest toward the topic while they are actually reading the text.

Following this 42-item list is space for ten free entries. They are provided to give participants a chance to add other topics related to their interests which are not indicated in the first part.

Goal Orientations Measures

This part of the survey consists of two sub scales, mastery goals (seven entries) and performance goals (five entries), designed to assess students' purposes for achievement in their learning of English, i.e., their goal orientations. Participants are asked to indicate their degree of agreement with each entry, using a five-point likert scale. Twelve items were rationally selected, based on comparable items from other studies, such as the twelve (nine and three in each) in Meece *et al.* (1988) and in Meece and Holt (1993), twelve (six each) in Elliot and Church (1997) and in Elliot (1999).

The mastery goal scale includes items which imply that students' goals are to develop new skills, learn and understand something new. They are elicited from sentences such as *"I want to understand all class activities and home assignments"* and *"I want to learn something new in each lesson."* The performance scale consists of items which indicate that learners' goals are to demonstrate their performance as superior to others and to get better public evaluation. These goals are elicited from sentences such as *"I try my best to learn English because I want others to think that I am smart"* and *"It is important for me to do all exercises better than other students."* The statements for both of these scales are mainly adopted from Meece *et al.* (1988), Elliot and Church (1997) and are also employed in several subsequent studies (e.g., Elliot, 1999; Meece & Holt, 1993). Some of them were adapted to be relevant to the study of English only and to suit the language level of the current participants.

Procedures

After developing the topic interest and two goal orientation scales, the researcher translated the whole survey into Vietnamese as the participants' level of English proficiency would have been inadequate for them to respond accurately to the survey. Back-translation was then employed. The Vietnamese version was sent to a Vietnamese high school teacher of English and a Vietnamese postgraduate student majoring in TESOL Studies. They were asked to translate this back into English. All the differences between the original English version and the three translated English versions are carefully examined in order to produce a final version in Vietnamese. As a result of the back-translation procedure, some changes were made to both versions in terms of word choice.

The final Vietnamese version was then piloted with two eighth graders, three ninth graders and two tenth graders (three males and four females totally) in Khanh Hoa, Vietnam. These subjects were not among those selected for the main sample of the study. The pilot trials showed that these subjects did not have any problem with understanding and responding to the survey. Therefore, no further amendments were made, and it was accepted as the final Vietnamese version.

RESULTS

Topic Interest

To understand students' levels of interest in the 42 topics presented to them, a comparison of topic means was adopted. Students showed that they varied in their levels of interest in different topics. Some topics such as *Traveling* (M=4.57), *Tet holiday* (M=4.52), and *Circus* (M=4.31) were reported to be of greater interest for learners, while those such as *Theatre* (2.67) and *Family Issues* (M=2.66) triggered a relatively low level of interest

among learners. Based on these ratings, the 42 topics were divided into three groups: the most (7 items, $4.07 \leq M \leq 4.57$), the medium (30 items, $3.13 \leq M \leq 3.96$), and the least interesting (5 items, $2.66 \leq M \leq 2.81$).

In order to gain a better understanding of topic interest, two different grouping strategies were employed. Initially, a rational procedure, the Q-sort (Kerlinger, 1964) was adopted to categorize the 42 topics based on their perceived similarities, using 6 raters (five TESOL research postgraduate students and a professor). Nine groups of topics were resulted, including *Sports* (5 items), *Holidays* (4 items), *Entertainment* (7 items), *Science and Technology* (4 items), *Ways of Living and Working* (4 items), *Nature and Environment* (2 items), *Famous People* (7 items), *Social Issues* (4 items), and *International Customs and Traditions* (5 items). The 42 topics were also grouped based on the results of an examination of the correlation coefficients among the topic interest scores, using factor analysis. The rotated varimax factor matrix showed significant overlap with the grouping result found through the Q-sort. However, some Q-sort groups were further divided into smaller categories by the factor analysis procedure, and some items were moved to other groups, resulting in eleven statistically independent groups.

The eleven categories obtained from the factor analysis were examined to see what pattern of interest across topics the students had. *Tet Festival* (M=4.52), topics about *Science and Technology* (M=3.95), and *Important People and Lifestyles* (M=3.84) were rated most interesting and demonstrated their dominant strength over topics about *Nature and Environment* (M=3.20) and *Social Issues* (M=2.99). *Social Issues* was also the only group whose mean was below the average level ($M_{average}$=3.00); the means of the other ten groups were all above the average level (see Table 1). This result was different from that of Hidi and McLaren in which all the topic means were above the average level.

TABLE 1
Descriptive Statistics on Mean Differences Among Topic Groups

Topic Groups	N	Min	Max	Sum	Mean	SD	Skewness
Tet Holiday	834	1	5	3771	4.52	.85	-1.85
Science and Technology	834	1	5	3294	3.95	.77	-0.77
Important People & Lifestyles	834	1	5	3206	3.84	.73	-0.62
Entertainment & Living Places	834	1	5	3169	3.80	.52	-0.32
Famous People in Arts	834	1	5	3022	3.62	.89	-0.42
International Customs & Cultures	834	1	5	3010	3.61	.98	-0.57
Popular Sports	834	1	5	2992	3.59	1.00	-0.53
Public Holiday & Daily Life	834	1	5	2833	3.40	.66	-0.24
Other Sports	834	1	5	2828	3.39	.81	-0.28
Nature & Environment	834	1	5	2672	3.20	1.27	-0.24
Social Issues	834	1	5	2490	2.99	.88	0.08

Based on the mean differences among eleven topic groups that resulted from factor analysis, these topics were further classified into three groups: the least, the medium and the most interesting categorizations, comprising 4 groups of topics ($2.99 \leq M \leq 3.40$), 4 groups of topics ($3.59 \leq M \leq 3.80$), and 3 groups of topics ($3.84 \leq M \leq 4.52$) respectively.

Goal Orientation

An overall scale mean score was calculated for each scale of goal orientation type by adding all of the item scores on the scale and dividing by the total number of items. Subsequently, the correlation between these two scales was tested. With a correlation coefficient of 0.036 (α=0.06), it was concluded that these two scales were not statistically significantly correlated, confirming the two separate goal orientation classifications found in prior research. This could also be concluded that the development of one orientation type was independent from that of the other, and that students naturally developed their own set of reasons for learning English. As a result,

a student's goal orientation scores may be strongly obtained by either goal separately, by neither or by both of goal orientation types, and this would be expected to influence their ESL learning.

Referring to prior studies, the roles of these two orientation types in the goal construct needed to be reexamined. In some studies (such as Church *et al.*, 2001; Vansteenkiste *et al*., 2004), a significant correlation between these two types of goal orientation was found. However, it was not supported in Harackiewicz *et al.* (1997), Harackiewicz *et al.* (2000) nor in this study. As mastery and performance goals were not statistically correlated, they could not be said to be the only two sub-components of the broader construct of goal orientation. However, it could be argued that although these two components, while not correlated with each other, may both be correlate with some other component(s) of the goal construct which might have not been identified yet. Hence, supplementary components such as goal avoidance (suggested by Elliot, 1999; Elliot & Harackiewicz, 1996), mastery avoidant and performance avoidant orientations (suggested by Elliot & McGregor, 2001) or other undiscovered orientations should be tested to construct a better overall conceptual goal orientation framework.

Topic Interest and Goal

Statistical analysis on the relationship between each type of goal orientation with each of the eleven topic groups indicated a complex pattern. First, mastery goal was significantly correlated with 10 of the 11 topic groups ($p<0.01$). Therefore, its correlation with the overall topic interest was also statistically significant ($r=0.403$, $p<0.01$). Second, performance goal was significantly correlated with 5 of the 11 topic groups at $p<0.01$ and 1 of the 11 topic groups at $p<0.05$. As a result, the correlation between performance goal and the overall topic interest was also statistically significant ($p<0.01$) although it was not so strong compared to that of mastery goal ($r_P=0.098$ vs. $r_M=0.403$). Table 2 presents all of these correlations.

TABLE 2
Pearson Product Moment Correlations
Between 11 Topic Groups and Two Types of Goal Orientation

Topic Groups	Correlation Coefficient with Mastery Goals	Correlation Coefficient with Performance Goals
Tet Holiday	.138(**)	.069(*)
Science and Technology	.259(**)	.057
Important People & Lifestyles	.291(**)	.043
Entertainment & Living Places	.278(**)	.108(**)
Famous People in Arts	.185(**)	.124(**)
International Customs & Cultures	.316(**)	-.026
Popular Sports	.008	.094(**)
Public Holiday & Daily Life	.267(**)	.137(**)
Other Sports	.214(**)	.046
Nature & Environment	.128(**)	-.114(**)
Social Issues	.143(**)	.052
All Topics	.403 (**)	.098 (**)

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

A stronger correlation of topic interest with mastery goals than with performance goals indicated that students preferred understanding to outperforming what they are interested in. In addition, it suggested either that topic interest could enhance the development of mastery goals more than performance goals or that mastery goals could trigger a higher level of topic interest than performance goals did. These differences were also influenced by the topics themselves. For example, in areas such as *Popular Sports*, performance rather than understanding the necessary skills was important; and the assessment was based on the relative performance among the group. Therefore, this topic group was correlated with performance goals, not with mastery goals. In contrast, *Other Sports*, which did not require competition and people just played for fun, triggered a significant level of mastery goals, not performance goals.

DISCUSSION

The topic inventory that resulted from the study indicated a varied range of topics that were of interest to students. This list of topics could be a rich source for topical textbook designers. Among the topics rated most highly were *Tet Holiday* and *Christmas,* which demonstrated a significant dominance over other topics. This could indicate either that students were very motivated by some kind of activity related to relaxation or that their need for particular traditional and religious activities was very high. In contrast, topics about society, nature and environment did not trigger a high level of interest in students. Factors that have some impact on this trend may be the distinct cultural values, the low level of environment awareness or the lack of information on how influential these social problems could be for society and themselves. Qualitative interview research related to these topic groups would be needed to seek more specific answers.

One of the most important concerns presented in the previous section was the uncorrelated relationship between mastery and performance goals. Although they were distinguished from each other by a salient distinction which led to opposite directions of initiated resources, the development of each type was independent from the other. Therefore, each of them may be stabilized, increased or decreased without being influenced by the status of the other and overlapping between them could easily take place. The resource which facilitated one type of orientation may contribute to the adoption of the other. These complex bilateral changes were suggested for future investigations.

In an attempt to fill a gap provoked by the review of literature, the relationship between topic interest and each type of goal orientation was tested. Similar to the previous studies (such as Ames & Archer, 1988; Archer, 1994; Harackiewicz, *et al.*, 2000; Pintrich *et al.*, 1998), a positive correlation between mastery goals and topic interest was found, indicating that people by nature were interested in certain topics and would like to understand those topics. In addition, a new positive correlation between performance goals and topic interest was established, suggesting that people would like not only to

master what they found interesting, but also wanted to perform better than the others at what interested them. In brief, to ninth grade ESL/EFL students, interesting topics increased motivation for learning.

The correlation between topic interest and both types of goal orientation again presented an example for the complicatedness of the goal construct. As resulted from the scale tests, the adoption of one type of goal orientation was irrelevant to the adoption of the other. However, they were both significantly correlated with topic interest. These implied that both mastery and performance goals interacted with each other in triggering a level of interest toward certain topics. The strength and stage that each type of goal orientation took part in contributing to topic interest may be different. For example, performance goals may start contributing before mastery goals, but when mastery goals were activated, they may contribute much more than the performance goals did to the enhancement of topic interest. These complicated patterns of goal orientation development are open for further analyses.

The study results implied that the mastery goals have a more qualitative impact in accelerating topic interest than performance goals; therefore, the internal structure of topic interest was brought into consideration. As the definition of each construct indicated, the two components of topic interest are associated with the two types of goal orientation. It is therefore hypothesized that mastery goals primarily contribute to the development of individual interest, while performance goals mainly enhance situational interest. Because mastery goals are stronger than performance goals, the level of individual interest as a sub-component of topic interest is higher than that of situational interest. This result also explains why the correlation coefficient of topic interest with mastery goals is higher than that of topic interest with performance goals.

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APPENDIX

List of the 42 topics used in the survey

1	Football	22	Working Life
2	Volleyball	23	City Life
3	Cricket	24	Countryside Life
4	Badminton	25	Lifestyles of people in the world
5	Swimming	26	Natural Disasters (storms, flood, hurricanes…)
6	Tet Holiday	27	Special Phenomenon (eclipse, volcano, hail…)
7	May Day	28	National Heroes
8	Independence Day	29	Famous Scientists
9	Women's Day	30	Famous Leaders
10	Circus	31	Guinness Record Holders
11	Entertainment Complex	32	Famous Musicians
12	Movies	33	Famous Artists
13	Theatre	34	Famous Writers
14	Television	35	Individual Issues (stress, tardiness, studying…)
15	Traveling	36	Family Issues (marriage, divorce, family planning, children…)
16	Shopping	37	Social Issues (health care, civil rights, justice…)
17	Computers	38	Global Issues (green house effects, environment, population, war…)
18	Robots	39	English Usages and Varieties
19	Space exploration	40	American Traditions and Customs
20	Scientific Achievements	41	British Traditions and Customs
21	School Life	42	Australian Traditions and Customs