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ATTITUDES, MOTIVATION AND ACHIEVEMENT IN LEARNING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

**SULLAIMAN BIN ALI
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PERAK DARUL RIDZUAN**

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**THIS PROJECT PAPER IS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL
FULFILMENT FOR THE REQUIREMENT OF THE
MASTER OF EDUCATION (TESL)**

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DECLARATION

I hereby declare that the work in this project paper is my own except for quotations and summaries which have been duly acknowledge.

Date: 06 APRIL 2007

Signature:

Name: SULLAIMAN BIN ALI

Registration No.: M20051000017





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In the name of Allah the Most Gracious and The Most Merciful.

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Thank you.





ABSTRAK

Sikap dan motivasi merupakan dua aspek penting dalam menentukan kejayaan para pelajar di dalam proses pembelajaran mereka. Kedua-dua aspek ini saling berinteraksi dan mempengaruhi antara satu sama lain dan kekurangan salah satu daripadanya akan menyebabkan kurangnya keupayaan serta kejayaan pelajar di dalam pembelajaran mereka.

Kajian ini bertujuan untuk melihat sejauh manakah korelasi di antara sikap dan motivasi pelajar terhadap kejayaan mereka dalam mempelajari Bahasa Inggeris Sebagai Bahasa Kedua. Di samping itu, kajian ini juga bertujuan untuk mengetahui sejauh manakah sikap dan motivasi pelajar terhadap pengajaran Bahasa Inggeris serta apakah kaedah pembelajaran yang disukai mereka di dalam kelas.



Kajian ini dijalankan dalam masa dua belas minggu dan data dikumpul melalui soalan soalselidik yang telah diberikan kepada pelajar-pelajar di Institut Kemahiran MARA, Lumut. Setiap soalan soalselidik ini telah dibuat secara teliti supaya pelajar dapat memberikan maklumat secara jelas dan betul mengenai sikap dan motivasi mereka terhadap pengajaran Bahasa Inggeris Sebagai Bahasa Kedua.

Secara umumnya, tahap sikap dan motivasi pelajar adalah tinggi. Walau bagaimanapun, korelasi di antara kedua-dua pembolehubah ini dengan kemajuan pelajaran mereka adalah di peringkat sederhana.





ABSTRACT

Attitudes and motivation are two important elements in determining the achievement of students in their learning. These two aspects interact and influence each other and lacking either one of this aspect will contribute to poor achievement or performance of the students in their study.

This study is aimed to find out the correlation between the students' attitudes and motivation with their achievement towards learning English as a second language. Along the line, this study also seeks to explore on the students' level of attitudes and motivation as well as their learning preferences in the classroom.

The study was conducted in twelve weeks and data are gathered by using questionnaire which is given to 138 students from MARA Vocational Institute, Lumut. Each item in this questionnaire is carefully designed in order to enable the students to provide clear and precise information regarding their attitudes and motivation towards learning of English as a second language.

Generally, it was found that students' attitudes and motivation towards learning English were favourable. Nevertheless, the correlation between these variables and students' achievement was only at a moderate level.





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CHAPTER 1

BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

1.0 Introduction

Attitudes and motivation are two important elements in determining the achievement of students in any learning process. These two aspects interact and influence each other and lacking in either one of these two will contribute to poor achievement or performance of the students in their study. Most successful students agree that a good combination of these two qualities have strongly influenced their study, achievement and most importantly their final examination performance.

In order to be successful in their study, students should develop the right attitude and possess a strong motivation in whatever field or study in which they are involved. There are many factors and causes that influenced students' attitude and motivation in their study. Teachers and trainers should give special attention to these variables so that they will be able to help the students to promote the right attitude and motivation necessary for achieving their goals in learning.





1.1 The Definition of Attitudes

According to the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary (2000), attitude is "the way that you think and feel about something or somebody and the way that you behave towards something or somebody and that shows how you think and feel."

The Macquarie Dictionary (1992), on the other hand defines attitude as "position, disposition or manner with regard to a person or thing etc. and position of the body appropriate to an action, emotion etc."

From the above dictionary definitions, we know that to explain or to define attitude in the simplest form will not only be incomplete but futile. This is because attitudes have a diversity of definitions. However, in this diversity there appears to be an agreement on the definition of this word. Attitude is expressed as the likelihood of behaviour to take place in the particular situation with the presence of mental and neutral state (Rejacki, 1982). On the other situation, Allport, a prominent figure who studied attitudes for three decades and whose definitions have been regularly cited in the work of researchers and in literature of attitudes study states that attitude is:

"A mental or neutral state of readiness, organize through experience, exerting a directive or dynamic influence upon the individuals' response to all objects and situation in which is related."

(Allport in Jahoda and Warren, 1996:20)





In discussing about the importance of attitudes, William James (1892/1962) had once said “the greatest discovery of my generation is that human beings can alter their lives by altering their attitudes of mind.”

William James’s opinion on the importance of attitudes in shaping the future of human beings is also supported by various studies conducted by numerous scholars including Allport, Cook, Gardner and Lambert and many others. Based on these studies, it was found that attitude of the learner is very importance in determining the success of the students in their study.

1.2 Definition of Motivation



According to the Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (2003, p.1072), motivation is eagerness and willingness to do something without needing to be told or forced to do it. Meanwhile, in psychology, motivation refers to the initiation, direction, intensity and persistence of behaviour (Geen, 1995).

Apart from the definition given by Longman Dictionary and Geen, other psychologists have come out with general consensus that motivation can be defined as an internal state or condition sometimes described as a need, desire, or want that serves to activate or energize behaviour and give it direction (Kleinginna and Kleinginna, 1981). The components of motivation can be summarised as the following:





- internal state or condition that activates behaviour and gives it direction
- desire or want that energizes and directs goal-oriented behaviour and
- influence of needs and desires on the intensity and direction of behaviour.

In a second language learning context, the term motivation is seen according to Gardner (1985, p.10) as ‘referring to the extent to which the individual works or strives to learn the language because of a desire to do so and the satisfaction experienced in this activity.’

Hence, the abstract term ‘motivation’ on its own is rather difficult to be defined but it is easier and more useful to think in terms of the ‘motivated’ learner that is the one who is willing or even eager to invest effort in learning activities and to progress.

1.3 Background of the Problem

MARA Vocational Institute is established, with the aim of providing vocational training to Malays and other Bumiputera in various disciplines in order to fulfil the current needs of industrial and technology development. Beside that, it is hoped that, this institution will also create and increase the number of Bumiputera entrepreneurs and upgrade their level of participation in the commercial and industrial community.

Apart from technical training as the core component, general studies also play a vital part as a foundation for the students before embarking into more challenging





tasks. English as one of the subjects in general studies is taught for two hours per week for all courses and all students must pass this subject as pre-requisite for graduation.

Meanwhile, based on the examination result recorded by all MARA Vocational Institutes in 2003, 2004 and 2005, it was found that generally the standard of English among students has deteriorated (The Examination Reports).

The deteriorating standard of English at MARA Vocational Institutes today as well as in all Malaysian schools in general is closely related to the long time findings obtained by the Ministry of Education in 1985. In the study conducted, it was reported that:



“The quality of teaching and learning English in schools especially in national schools is found to be less than satisfactory. Some of the pupils do not know how to read and write in English, even in its simplest form. The percentage of passes in public examination for national type school is very low.”

(Malaysian Ministry of Education, 1985:58)

The repercussion of the study was significant in which from many steps have been taken by the ministry in order to rectify the problem. Among them, Malaysians at large has seen the emergence of Kurikulum Baru Sekolah Menengah (KBSM) in 1988 and English is used in teaching mathematic and science subject for Year One, Form One and Lower Six in all Malaysian school commencing in 2003. Nevertheless, it is felt that these efforts have not given big changes to the standard of English in Malaysia in general.





According to Fauziah Hassan and Nita Fauzee Selamat (2003), apparently, in implementing the KBSM programme, most teachers, the *KBSM* syllabus and the national examinations are mainly focus on two language skills; writing and reading. Another major focus was on grammar and teachers were also found to be teaching mainly for the national examinations and not for improving the communication skills. Further more, not much emphasis was given to listening and speaking in both classroom teaching and national examinations.

As a result, many students who join MARA Vocational Institute after their Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia Examination were generally poor in English especially in their speaking and listening skills. Nevertheless, the English teachers in MARA institution have done their very best to help the students to improve their English but the result shown so far was not very convincing and the problem was far from over.



According to the teachers, apart from students' poor background knowledge in English language, other factors also contributed to the declining of this standard. In relation to this, many of them have voiced out their grave concern regarding the negative attitudes and lack of motivation shown by the students in learning English and thus affect their achievement in general.

1.4 Purpose of the Study

In order to get a clear picture on this scenario, a study concerning student's attitudes and motivations has been carried out as to determine the effect of these two variables





on each other and whether or not they provide a negative implication to the English language teaching and as a result hampered the achievement of the students in general.

1.5 Rationale for the Study

English is taught as a compulsory subject for two hours per week and the current result has shown that many students did not do well or even failed in their English exam. As a result they could not complete their study and have to reseat the English paper until they passed. This study is essential in order to help the management authorities at the MARA Vocational Institute especially the Vice Principal of Academic Affairs (HEA) to determine the causes of the failure and to initiate necessary steps to overcome the problem.



1.6 Significance of the Study

It is believed that the result of this study might help the Principal and Vice Principal of Academic Affairs to initiate some relevant steps in improving the teaching and learning process at the centre. At the same time it will also shed some light to the teachers in determining the methods or approaches to be employed in their teaching. The teachers also will learn their mistakes (if any) as mentioned in the report by the Ministry of Education earlier and make necessary changes or vary their teaching styles in order to make the learning process more meaningful and enjoyable for the students.





1.7 Aims and Justification of the Study

Primarily, the aims of the study is to provide specific answer on the assumptions given by the English teachers that the drastic decline of the standard of English among the students of MARA Vocational Institute is not only because of their poor background knowledge in the language but also due to their negative attitudes and motivations towards the English language. In order to find out the true answer of this situation, it is essential that the study should be carried out.

1.8 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are to find out on the following aspects of the students of MARA Vocational Institute.



1.8.1 The students' attitudes toward the learning of English as a second language (ESL) in the institution.

1.8.2 The causes that contribute to the negative or positive attitudes toward learning English as a second language (ESL).

1.8.3 The students' level of motivations in learning English as a second language (ESL).

1.8.4 The relationship between attitudes, motivation and the students' achievement in their study.

1.8.5 The students' preferred learning method in learning English as a second language (ESL).





1.9 Research Questions

The study on attitudes, motivations and achievement in Learning English as a second language (ESL) at MARA Vocational Institute is focussed on four research questions.

The four research questions are:

1.9.1 What is the attitude of the students towards learning English as a second language (ESL)?

1.9.2 What is the level of motivation that the students possess towards learning English as a second language (ESL)?

1.9.3 What is the relationship between students' attitudes and motivation with their achievement in learning English as a second language (ESL)?

1.9.4 What are the students' preferred learning methods in learning English as a second language?



1.10 Hypothesis and Assumption of the Study

Negative attitudes and lack of motivations among MARA Vocational Institute's students toward learning English as a second language has brought to their poor achievement in the final examination.

1.11 Limitation of the Study

The finding of the study does not represent the whole population of the students at MARA Vocational Institute, Lumut. This study is limited to 138 students from the total number of one thousand three hundred. The time limit for the study also poses a





constraint as the time available does not allow the researcher to conduct a more thorough study on the topic.

1.12 Definition of Terms

Attitudes – The conduct or habit of the second semester students at MARA Vocational Institute toward learning English as a second language (ESL).

Motivations – The internal drive and interest of the students toward learning English as a second language (ESL).

Achievement – The success and progress made by the students in the English test and other assessment.



MARA Vocational Institute (IKM) – A vocational institution established by the Council of Trust for Indigenous People or MARA to provide vocational training to Bumiputera.

Second Semester Students – Students who study in the second semester from the three semesters or one and a half year training.

ESL – The teaching of English as a second language.

Vice Principal of Academic Affairs (HEA) – A Vice Principal who is in charged of the academic affairs in MARA Vocational Institute.





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English Teachers - DG 41 / DC 41 teachers majoring in TESL or English Literature assigned to teach English subject in MARA Vocational Institutes and other centres within MARA.

General Studies – Academic subjects comprising of English, Mathematic, Islamic Studies, Malaysian Studies and Entrepreneurship taught at MARA Vocational Institutes as compulsory subjects.



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