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# ATTITUDES AND MOTIVATION IN SPEAKING ENGLISH IN A RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL : A CASE STUDY

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## DECLARATION

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

Date : 7.1.2011



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M20061000109

## DEDICATION

Dedicated to my

beloved mother, father, husband and sister.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project paper would certainly be incomplete without the acknowledgement of the valuable assistance which I had received from various sources. Here I would like to express my sincere thanks and appreciation to the following people.

A special “thank you” to my supervisor, Dr. Hj Abdul Ghani Hj Abu for his patience, advice and guidance throughout this research.

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And a very special “thank you” to my family especially to my father, mother and husband for their special care and support throughout my study.

“Thank you very much” to all of you, “May God Bless You” in all your undertakings

## ABSTRAK

Penyelidikan ini menggunakan temubual berkaitan topik motivasi dan attitude terhadap penguasaan percakapan di dalam Bahasa Inggeris di kalangan pelajar-pelajar sekolah berasrama penuh. Sebaik data dikumpul dan dikaji kajian kes dicatat berkenaan pelajar.. Kajian kes disusun secara sistematik. Setiap data tentang kes disusun secara turutan mengenai pendapat mereka berbahasa Inggeris

Penyelidikan ini dijalankan di sebuah sekolah berasrama penuh yang terkenal di Klang, Selangor. Terdapat lebih kurang 700 pelajar dan untuk tujuan kajian in pelajar-pelajar Tingkatan Empat dipilih. Sekolah ini terletak di kawasan bandar.

Enam pelajar dipilih dan memberi respon terhadap soalan-soalan yang diajukan. Respon mereka dicatat dan dikaji. Kaedah temubual. Pemerhatian dan catatan nota digunakan dalam kajian ini. Data dikaji menggunakan kaedah Cohen Kappa untuk memastihkan kesahihan dan reliabiliti kajian. Data dikaji menggunakan kod interpretatif dan deskriptif.

Faktor utama yang sering timbul dalam kajian ini adalah peranan guru bersama-sama dengan rakan sebaya, keluarga, dan faktor diri sendiri. Peserta juga memberi respon atas sebab tidak berbahasa Inggeris. Setiap peserta tidak menafikan yang mereka bersikap positif terhadap aktiviti bahasa Inggeris yang dijalankan di dalam bilik darjah. Peserta mempunyai keyakinan diri untuk bertutur dalam bahasa ini.

Beberapa kajian untuk masa depan disarankan dan beberapa kaedah pengajaran dan pembelajaran harus diambilkira untuk pelajar.

## ABSTRACT

The current investigation used in-depth interviews with guiding questions to study the attitudes and motivation as contributing factor to speak English in a residential school. Once the data were collected and analyzed, case studies were written. The case studies were all organized in the same manner. First, each participant was presented in a chronological order, regarding their views of speaking English.

The study was carried out in a well-known residential school in Klang, Selangor. There are almost 700 hundred students in this school and participants are students selected in Form Four for the purpose of this study. The school is situated in a town area.

Six participants were selected for this naturalistic case study where their responses were recorded and analyzed. In-depth interviews, observations and field notes were used as methods in the study. The data were analyzed using Cohen Kappa's realibility check to ensure reliability and validity of the data. Data were analyzed according to interpretative and descriptive code.

The main factor emerged in this study was the teacher factor, besides family, peer influence and self oriented. Participants also responded the reasons of not speaking in English. As far as participants attitudes towards speaking English, they were mostly positive and motivating. Participants displayed a sense of intrinsic motivation in their in learning to speak the language.

Several recommendations for further research and more effective teaching were made as a result of what was found in this investigation.

## LIST OF SYMBOLS, ABBREVIATIONS OR NOMENCLATURE

1. ESL - English as a Second Language
2. SL - Second Learner
3. L1 - First Language
4. L2 - Second Language
5. UPSR - Ujian Pencapaian Sekolah Rendah
6. PMR - Penilaian Menengah Rendah

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**BIODATA OF THE AUTHOR**

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Research Background

English Language is widely used in the world and in Malaysia. With the implementation of the National Education Policy (NEP) in 1971, the focus is more on Bahasa Malaysia as the National Language, English as the second language (ESL) which means, it becomes a second option in interaction after Bahasa Malaysia. The government and the Malaysian ministers have really considered and emphasized the importance of English Language among Malaysians, especially if we want to become more successful and maintain the rate of development. In schools, although English is not a compulsory subject to pass in examination, it is still being used because :

“ English is an asset to keep, since it can provide..... an avenue for international relations as well as a means to their advancement in Science and Technology”.

( Asmah, 1992 : 12 )

Whose challenge is it than to improve the proficiency of the students ? It has to be everybody's challenge at one level or another and in some way or another. Hence, the responsibility lies with policy-makers, teachers and of course, on the students themselves.

Many approaches have been introduced to the English language syllabus in an attempt to arrest this slide, including the introduction of Communication English and Technical English. Crucial to these introductions is actually finding and sorting out real reasons behind the decline as well as enhancing any preexisting motivating factors for mastery of the language. It is prudent to understand the concept of second language acquisition and learning before embarking on such research.

Second language acquisition is a complex process and it is dependent on several linguistic and non-linguistic factors. Second language learners already possess a native language, a set of language habits ( L1 ) and have developed cognitively as compared to when they were acquiring L1 in their early childhood. Some of these linguistic factors may be helpful to the L2 learning (positive transfer) whereas others may hinder the process (negative transfer as interference). Non linguistic factors may be grouped under three categories : Motivation and attitude, opportunity and language learning ability.

Motivation and attitude have been found to be strong determinants for success or failure in second language learning. "Given motivation anybody can learn a language", said (Coda, cited in Skehan 1989:49). Motivation is something that makes students learn and keeps them learning. On the other hand, attitudes toward a language setting or a target culture affect the degree of motivation to learn a language. Whereas motivation is a personal inner factor, which drives people to do something in the outside world.

Speaking on the other hand, is basically the production of oral sounds that can be understood by other speakers of the language. Speaking requires that learners not only know how to produce specific points of language such as grammar, pronunciation, or vocabulary, but also that they understand when, and in what ways to produce language. Developing speaking skills is one of the major criteria in language learning. Some structural linguists suggest a number of hypotheses concerning language learning in their study of the language. The assumption, as illustrated by Richards and Rogers (1986 ) is that language should focus on

mastery of speech than writing or even written prompts should be with-held until reasonably late in the language learning process. They also explain that language skills are most effective learned in spoken form and that the aural-oral training is essential in achieving the goal. So speech has its own skills, structures, and conventions different from written language.

## 1.2 Significance of the study

It was anticipated that the study would provide useful information regarding the study of attitude and motivation as a contributing factor in speaking English as perceived by students in an ESL classroom of a residential school. It is also hoped that this study will explore the various strategies that can be used to help students to speak better.

Dr. Mahathir shared this concern, and expressed his feelings on 4<sup>th</sup> of May 2002. He observed that most of the graduates held degrees in Arts and Islamic studies, and apart from the insignificant demand for graduates of such disciplines, a compelling reason for their difficulty in securing jobs was their lack of proficiency in English. He proceeded to stress the need for added attention to English in schools and universities, arguing that Malaysians must be competent in the language if they were to compete in the international market. His stance on the importance of English was well accepted and many regarded a greater emphasis on English in National schools as a right step. (Source : NST, 5 May 2002 )

Communication skills should be emphasized among the students which would help them to be confident speakers. This study could also help teachers to provide a conducive environment where students get to practice the language whether in or out of the classroom. As adolescents develop, their ability to learn and understand concepts and develop skills becomes important in organizing age-appropriate programs. Educators need to teach

communication skills at the level of development, understanding and experience of growth.

Communication skills are related to increased social competence and related to their ability to communicate with people of all ages.

Though many studies were done on attitudes and motivation in secondary schools but there are not any studies done in using the qualitative research in a residential school. Thus this study is explore what motivates students the most in a residential school and to instill intrinsic motivation which needs to be developed further. In brief, it is hoped that this study will shed light on motivation and attitudes in speaking English, that it will help researchers delve deeper into the theoretical basis of this problem , and that researchers will explore the qualitative-naturalistic approach in greater depth. In addition, it is hoped that this study will aid curriculum designers to refine their awareness of the specific needs of residential school students to speak in English.



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### 1.3 Statement of the Problem

One consequence of the education policy implemented over the last three decades is the inability of many university graduates or students to be proficient in English. For example, in government service they were and are still unable to speak in English when conducting negotiations with foreigners. The overwhelming majority of those working in the government service are graduates from local public universities. With Bahasa Malaysia as the medium of instruction, students did not get the necessary exposure to English to enable them to attain a reasonable level of proficiency in English, and the added problem of limited books and reference materials in Bahasa Malaysia limit the students' capacity for acquiring knowledge.

( Asmah, 1992:9)



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According to Bloomfield (1972), a second language is best learned through speaking since it can enhance other skills simultaneously. This research, however, is based on a study of attitudes and motivation in speaking English faced by students in a residential school. No doubt they produce excellent results in their examinations, but they still lack proficiency in spoken language which hinders them to get the scholarships when they attend interviews.

Even though English has been taught in primary and secondary schools, there is a high percentage of students who fail to achieve an acceptable level of competence in English. Reasons cited for these state of affairs are because the majority of students have limited exposure to English in their lives and the motivation to learn English are relatively low (Nesamalar Chitravelu *et al*, 1995:9)

The important factors that obviously contribute to the low proficiency of the students in this study are linguistic competence, which are grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary, which lead to the lack of oral communication skills. A report by Mazura (1992) in her study reveals that, the emphasis in the classroom activities, is more on writing and grammar. Hence, their oral communication skills are not developed and the students become weak in speaking skills.

The difficulties in pronouncing word or sentences because of the mother tongue interference also prevented them from speaking. They use Bahasa Malaysia in their daily conversations. Therefore it certainly influences their ability and command of the language. They do understand what are being said to them in English but are unable to express their thoughts effectively in speaking.

Students in the 1970's seemed to have ample opportunities in practicing English in schools because of its position as the main medium of instruction. The language was used in class to teach every subject both in written and spoken form. Therefore, students were exposed to the language more often than in today's situation.

Therefore, teachers should employ various strategies in their attempt to modify learner's attitude towards English. Asmah (1975) says that there is a close relationship between

motivation and attitude in the sense that those with high motivation have definitely positive attitude to language learning. Meanwhile, those with negative attitude may not be motivated at all in learning the language. Chandrasegaran (1981) points out that this can be done by the contextualization of exercises for example, constant pattern practice, employing the technique of vocabulary learning in context, searching for meaning employing context clue approach inductive learning.

Another factor is that the pupils lack confidence speaking in English in the classroom. Therefore, they are afraid to engage in conversation and as a result the pupils lack proficiency in the language.

Students who learn the English Language must know how to use the language for communicative purposes. Learning a language alone is not enough. The English Language that is taught to students in the classroom has to be used by the students in order for the language to improve. Students do not use the English Language that has been learnt in the classroom. This will affect the students command of the English Language when they leave school. Moreover as we know, the current emphasis in English Language teaching in Malaysian schools is the Communicative Approach.

The use of the English Language as a communicative tool plays a very important role once the student leaves school. What is more important is whether the student had enough practice using the language when he or she was in school and enough to use them outside the classroom.

#### 1.4 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this study is to examine the attitudes and motivation as a contributing factor in spoken language as perceived by the students in an ESL classroom. The study is carried out among the form four students in a residential school. "Of all the four language skills, the speaking skill is probably the most affected by personality features. Students who are confident



and have experienced success are likely to be more motivated and more willing to try harder” (Nesamalar *et al*, 1995)

Some years ago, our former Prime Minister espoused Vision 2020 as the blue print for the future of Malaysia. It has successfully provided the frame of reference for the whole country to be an industrialized nation. Thus, Vision 2020 provides what might be called extrinsic motivation into intrinsic motivation. More specifically, how could teachers and students be helped to understand that English has a vital role in making Vision 2020 a reality? The involved parties need to have a more positive attitude in learning the language and take more stronger action in raising the standards of English of all students as the nation approaches Vision 2020.

## 1.5 Research Questions

1. What motivates students to speak in English ?
2. What are the students attitudes toward speaking activities in an English classroom?
3. What are the factors which influence students not to speak in English ?

## 1.6 Definitions of key concepts

### Attitudes

According to Lockhart & Richards, ( 1994 ) attitude means something related to someone's view, belief and way of thinking and how they respond. Schumann (1978) lists 'attitude' as a social factor on a par with variables such as 'size of learning group', and 'motivation' as an affective factor alongside culture shock'. Gardner and Lambert (1972) define attitude as the persistence shown by the learner in striving for a goal.

For the purpose of this study, the researcher would investigate the attitudes of students of the residential school towards the speaking activities carried out in the classroom through observations and interviews.

### Motivation

Different theories have proposed different conception about motivation.

Gardner (1985) defined motivation in his sociopsychological model as “the combination of effort plus desire to achieve the good of learning the language plus favourable attitude toward learning the language”. This is the most accepted definition of motivation in second language acquisition study. Gardner and Lambert (1972) define ‘motivation’ in terms of the L2 learners overall goal or orientation. Teevan (1967) stated that “the broad construct which psychologists have postulated to account for the activation of behaviour is motivation; and the more specific components of motivation relating to particular types of behaviour have been termed motivated”.

Motivation denotes what a person will do or want to do (Frostig, 1973:151). It could be defined as a need or an urge for achievement. A strong motivation relevant to learning is the individual desire to achieve something.

Instrumental motivation refers to motivation to acquire a language as means for attaining instrumental goals : furthering a career, reading technical material, translation; and so fourth. An integrative motive is employed when learners wish to integrate themselves within the culture of the second language group, to identify themselves with and become a part of that society.

On the other hand, Bany and Johnson (1995) define intrinsic and extrinsic motivation as follow :

a) Intrinsic motivation occurs when mastery of the learning task itself satisfies a need, or causes a resolution of tension. In a sense, intrinsic motivation is self motivation.

b) Extrinsic motivation refers to working on a task or pursuing some objective for reasons that lie outside of it. A person performs the activity because it leads to some external reward.

In the context of this study, the researcher attempts to explore the various sources of motivation such as parents, teachers, peers and personal factors which help the students in a residential school to speak though not fluent enough.

### Speaking

Speaking is “the process of building and sharing meaning through the use of verbal and non-verbal symbols, in a variety of contexts” (Chaney, 1998:13). Speaking is a crucial part of second language learning and teaching. Despite its importance, for many years, teaching speaking has been undervalued and English Language teachers have continued to teach speaking just as a repetition of drills or memorization of dialogues. However, today’s world requires that the goal of teaching speaking should improve students’ communicative skills, because, only in that way, students can express themselves and learn how to follow the social and cultural rules appropriate in each communicative circumstance.

Hence, in this context it is hoped through this study, students will acquire the language greater. Teachers could also influence students’ attitudes and motivation by addressing the misconceptions about second language learning and speaking. Ultimately, the goal is to ensure sustaining interest and continuing motivation in the students to speak the language.

For the purpose of this study, the researcher is to ascertain the reasons of not speaking English in a residential school though they come in with excellent results. Nor doubt they could understand and some could speak fluently, yet there are lots of interferences in communicating in English in the school which should be avoided.

## 1.7 Summary

The approach to teaching English in Malaysia schools should be eclectic and include principles of behaviorism, cognitivism, humanism, and give due importance to both learning and acquisition. Those responsible must help students realize the value of learning English and motivate them so that they want to learn; there must be opportunities for students to explore and analyse the language; there must be sufficient input of real-life language use to encourage acquisition. At the same time, there must be input of good models of English to enable students to refine the language they acquire. And lastly, the atmosphere in the language class should be encouraging, supportive and conducive to learning so that learners are able to use the language fluently and appropriately. (Nesamalar *et al*, 1995:9)