

SUMBANGAI

**FORM FOUR STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS LEARNING ENGLISH: A  
SURVEY IN A SECONDARY SCHOOL**

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## DECLARATION

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

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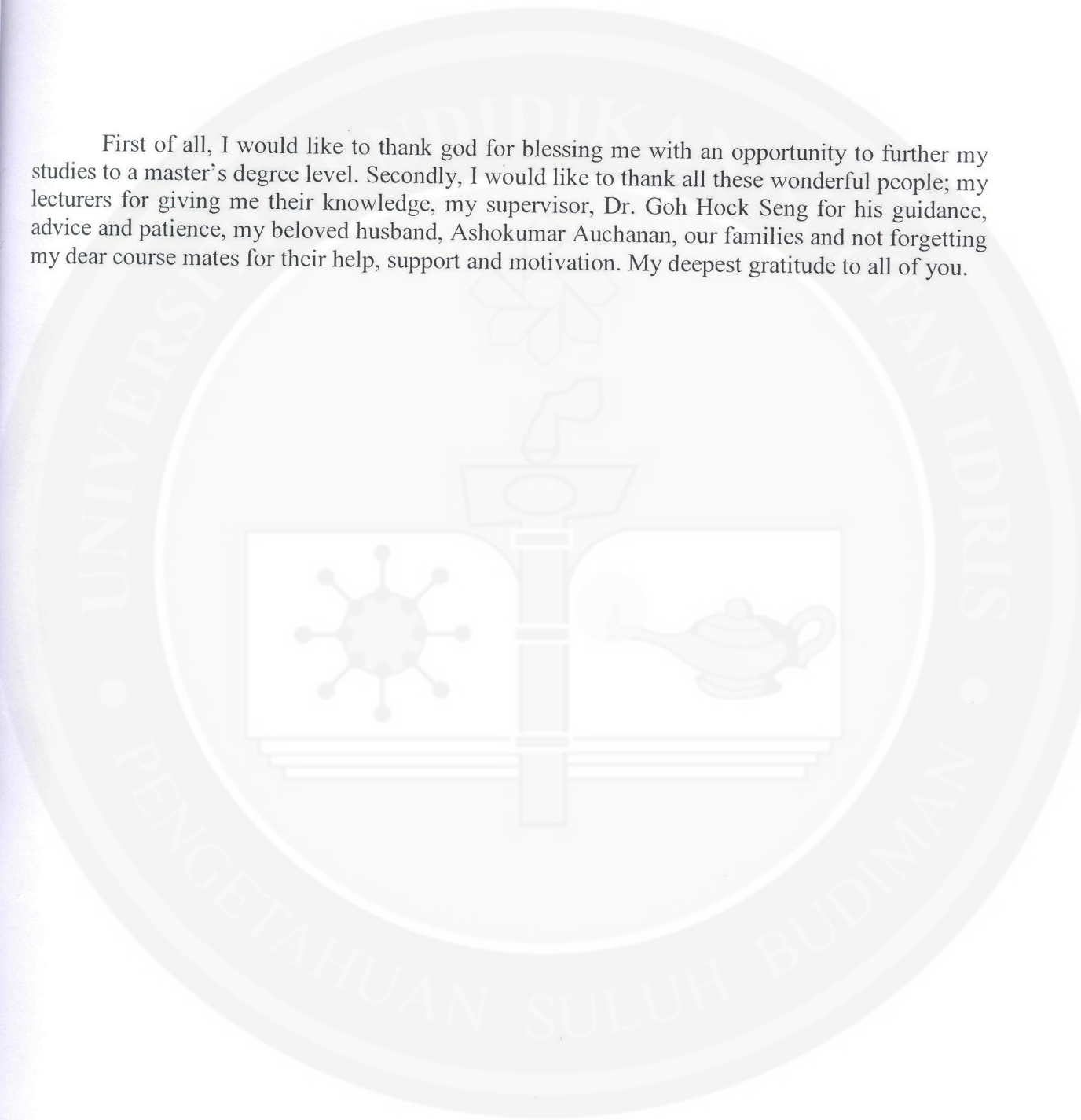


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## ABSTRACT

There are two purposes of this study. The first purpose is to discover the types of attitudes fostered by the form four students of a secondary school in Port Dickson, Negeri Sembilan towards learning English. The second purpose was to discover the existence of correlation between students' attitudes and their achievement in English. 164 form four students participated in this survey. A self-designed questionnaire was utilized to identify students' attitudes in learning English while their English achievement was based on their midyear examination results. The researcher personally administered the questionnaire to the respondents with the aid of form four English Language teachers in that school. The students' attitudes towards learning was divided into four attitudinal factors: (1) Form four students' overall attitudes towards learning English, (2) Form four students' attitudes towards learning English per say, (3) Form four students' attitudes towards their English teacher and (4) Form four students' attitudes towards the social implications of English. Students' attitude score from the questionnaire for each attitudinal factor was correlated with their midyear examination marks using the Pearson correlation method. The stepwise regression method was used to indicate which attitudinal factor has the most influence on students' achievement in English. The results of the study indicated: (1) most of the form four students displayed positive attitudes towards: (a) learning English, (b) learning English per say, (c) their English teacher and (d) the social implications of English, (2) there was only a weak positive correlation between students' English marks and: (a) students' overall attitudes towards learning English, (b) students' attitudes towards learning English per say, (c) students' attitudes towards their English teacher and (d) students' attitudes towards the social implications of English, (3) the stepwise regression method showed that students' attitudes towards learning English per say was the most influential factor of students' achievement in English.

## ABSTRAK

Kajian ini mengandungi 2 tujuan. Tujuan pertama kajian ini adalah untuk menyiasat sikap pelajar tingkatan empat sebuah sekolah menengah yang terletak di Port Dickson, Negeri Sembilan terhadap pembelajaran Bahasa Inggeris. Tujuan kedua kajian ini adalah untuk melihat kewujudan korelasi antara sikap pelajar dengan pencapaian mereka dalam Bahasa Inggeris. Seramai 164 pelajar tingkatan empat telah mengambil bahagian dalam tinjauan ini. Borang soal selidik yang direka sendiri oleh pengkaji telah digunakan untuk mengenalpasti sikap pelajar dalam mempelajari Bahasa Inggeris manakala pencapaian mereka dalam Bahasa Inggeris adalah berdasarkan kepada keputusan peperiksaan pertengahan tahun. Borang soal selidik telah diedarkan oleh pengkaji sendiri dengan dibantu oleh guru-guru Bahasa Inggeris tingkatan empat sekolah tersebut. Sikap pelajar terhadap pembelajaran Bahasa Inggeris telah dibahagikan kepada empat faktor sikap iaitu: (1) Sikap keseluruhan pelajar tingkatan empat terhadap pembelajaran Bahasa Inggeris, (2) Sikap pelajar tingkatan empat terhadap pembelajaran Bahasa Inggeris sahaja, (3) Sikap pelajar tingkatan empat terhadap guru Bahasa Inggeris mereka dan (4) Sikap pelajar tingkatan empat terhadap implikasi sosial Bahasa Inggeris. Skor sikap pelajar bagi setiap faktor sikap daripada borang soal selidik telah dikorelasi dengan markah Bahasa Inggeris peperiksaan pertengahan tahun dengan menggunakan kaedah korelasi Pearson. Kaedah 'stepwise regression' telah digunakan untuk mengenalpasti faktor sikap yang paling mempengaruhi pencapaian pelajar dalam Bahasa Inggeris. Keputusan kajian ini menunjukkan: (1) majoriti pelajar tingkatan empat menunjukkan sikap positif terhadap: (a) mempelajari Bahasa Inggeris secara keseluruhan, (b) mempelajari Bahasa Inggeris sahaja, (c) guru Bahasa Inggeris mereka dan (d) implikasi sosial Bahasa Inggeris, (2) terdapat korelasi positif yang lemah antara markah Bahasa Inggeris pelajar dengan : (a) sikap keseluruhan pelajar terhadap pembelajaran Bahasa Inggeris, (b) sikap pelajar terhadap pembelajaran Bahasa Inggeris sahaja, (c) ) sikap pelajar terhadap guru Bahasa Inggeris mereka dan (d) sikap pelajar terhadap implikasi sosial Bahasa Inggeris, (3) kaedah 'stepwise regression' menunjukkan bahawa sikap pelajar terhadap pembelajaran Bahasa Inggeris sahaja merupakan faktor yang paling mempengaruhi pencapaian mereka dalam Bahasa Inggeris.

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**LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

ATL	Attitudes towards Learning
ESL	English as a Second Language
TRA	Theory of Reasoned Action
CEA	The Council of the Education Achievement

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Introduction

In the Malaysian English as Second Language (ESL) classrooms, ESL teachers have to face many obstacles while teaching their students. These students come from multiracial and multicultural backgrounds with different opinions towards the importance of learning English. Some examples of the obstacles faced by ESL teachers are using ICT to teach English, discipline problems among students, time constraint in carrying out proper pedagogical methods to teach and students' attitude towards learning this language. All these problems can hinder ESL teachers' performance to teach effectively and exacerbate students' achievement in English.

This research is conducted to study the attitudes showed by the Form Four students of a secondary school where I teach in Port Dickson, Negeri Sembilan towards learning English and whether there is any correlation between these attitudes and their performance in the English examinations. Through this research, I hope to help the other English teachers in my school to learn which of their students possess positive, negative or neutral attitudes in learning English and the possible impact of these attitudes towards their achievement in their English examination.

## 1.2 Background of the Study

I have been teaching English for the past five years. I have observed different attitudes from students towards learning English. Some students enjoy learning English because they favor this subject while others like the way their English teacher teaches them. There are many students who are aware of the benefits of mastering English and therefore they are willing to learn this language whilst there are students who are not bothered about this international language at all. I have witnessed students who love learning English and they pass their English examinations with flying colors. There are students who claimed that English is not exactly their favorite subject but they still do well in the examinations. On the other hand, some weak students obstinately told me that learning English will not make a huge difference in their lives so they do not really care about mastering this subject. Last but not least, there are students who are eager to learn English but they do not fare well in the examinations due to their cognition abilities.

Why do students have different attitudes when it comes to learning English?

There have been many studies carried out on attitudes among students and yet the researchers are still interested in studying students' attitude towards learning.

According to the Association for Educational Communications and Technology (2001), educators are still keen in studying attitudes among students because attitude is a very important component in learning although there is no concrete evidence between the correlation of students' attitudes towards learning and their achievement. Verma (2002) asserted that attitude and motivation are two psychological variables which support learning and attitude may have impact on learning. Brown (2003) mentioned that attitudes towards learning (ATL) have been shown to influence students' learning outcomes.

Adams & Ewing (1991) stated that inappropriate teaching methods carried out by teachers in teaching English provoked Puerto Rican students to establish negative attitudes

towards learning English as a foreign language. Students who display negative attitude towards learning will not produce good results, (Verma, 2002). The main questions going through my mind are that why students foster different attitudes in learning English? What are the factors encouraging these attitudes? Could there be any correlation between these attitudes and students' performance in English? What roles can us as teachers play to overcome students' negative attitude towards English?

### 1.3 Need for the Study

Goh (1998) discovered that there is correlation between science achievement and students' attitude towards this subject whereas Eyu (1995) discovered through his research that there is no significant relationship between science achievement and science attitudes such as attitude towards science subject, attitude towards the subject teacher and attitude towards the social implications of science. Robinson (1995) carried out extensive study on the complex relationship between attitudes and achievement and she discovered that there is no correlation at all. Hence, the relationship between attitude and students' performance is rather ambiguous. However, I am keen on carrying out this study because I need to know the types of attitudes portrayed by my students and will these attitudes affect their performance in English language despite the fact that there is contradicting evidence between attitudes and achievement.

#### 1.4 **Statement of the Problem**

Through mere observations on my students, I could sense that some of my students favor English and some do not. My dilemma here is that I cannot simply conclude the types of attitudes fostered by my students towards learning English based on anecdotal feedback only. Next, I am unsure whether my students' attitudes towards learning English will affect their performance. Therefore, I hope to find solutions to these problems through this research.

#### 1.5 **Purpose of the Study**

The main purpose of this research is to investigate the attitudes of form four students of a secondary school situated in Port Dickson, towards learning English. I would also like to see whether there is existence of correlation between these attitudes and students' learning outcomes in English.

#### 1.6 **Research Questions**

The purpose of my study is aimed at answering the following questions:

- a) Do my form four students have positive, neutral or negative attitude towards learning English in my school?
- b) Is there any correlation between these attitudes among my form four students and their performance in English?

## 1.7 Definition of Terms

Below are some definitions of substantial terms related to this research:

### Attitude

According to Gerd Bohner and Michaela Wänke (2002), attitude can be defined as a summary evaluation of an object of thought. An attitude object can be a person discriminates or holds in mind. Attitude object may be concrete (e.g. car) or abstract (e.g. happiness). Attitude objects may also be innate things (e.g. sports car), person (e.g. Bill Clinton) or groups (pilgrims). There are three types of attitudes in general: positive, neutral and negative attitude.

### Positive Attitude

According to the Association for Educational Communications and Technology (2001), positive attitude is defined as a tentative construct which represents a person's like towards an attitude object. Gitomer (2007:26) stated the definition of positive attitude as *"how you choose to dedicate yourself to the way you think, how you choose to dedicate yourself to being positive, and how you choose to dedicate yourself to reacting in a positive way"*. He also insisted that the person's choice must be consistent.

### Negative Attitude

According to the Association for Educational Communications and Technology (2001), negative attitude is defined as a tentative construct which represents a person's dislike towards an attitude object.

## Neutral Attitude

(Bohner & Wanke, 2002) defined neutral attitude as having neither positive nor negative attitude towards the attitude object. A person who has neutral attitude is usually nonchalant towards the attitude object.

## Learning

Hornby (2001) defined learning as an action of gaining knowledge or skill by study, experience or being taught.

### 1.8 Significance of the Study

This research will provide benefits for ESL teachers and learners of this school. Through this research, I will learn whether these form four students possess positive, neutral or negative attitude towards learning English and is there any possible impact of these attitudes on students' performance. Other than that, I can help the ESL teachers in my school to realize the types of attitudes portrayed by their students in learning English and will their attitudes affect their achievement in English.

### 1.9 Summary

As mentioned earlier, this research is carried out to discover the attitudes of the form four students in a secondary school, Port Dickson in learning English and is there any correlation between these attitudes and students' performance in English. The literature review shall be discussed in the following chapter.