

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

**SULLAIMAN BIN ALI  
(M20051000017)**

**LANGUAGE FACULTY  
UNIVERSITI PENDIDIKAN SULTAN IDRIS  
35900 TANJONG MALIM  
PERAK DARUL RIDZUAN**

**2007**

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

**SULLAIMAN BIN ALI  
(M20051000017)**

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

**LANGUAGE FACULTY  
UNIVERSITI PENDIDIKAN SULTAN IDRIS  
35900 TANJONG MALIM  
PERAK DARUL RIDZUAN**

**2007**

## 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

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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

All praise is due to Allah S.W.T, the Lord of The World who made it possible for me to complete this project paper. Blessings and salutations be upon the Last Prophet of Allah, Muhammad S.A.W, (Peace be upon Him) his family and companions.

First of all I would like to thank and express my deepest appreciation and gratitude to all parties and those who have been involved in contributing their precious ideas in helping me to carry out and to complete this project paper.

Special thanks to my supervisor Dr. Mariam Mohamed Nor for her strong support, encouragement, patience and understanding in preparing and supervising me to complete this report. Her professionalism, experience and knowledge have been invaluable. Without the assistance and guidance from her, this study would not be completed.

I also would like to express my sincere thanks to my colleagues and lecturers for their advice, support and constructive ideas to me to complete this project paper.

Finally, my special acknowledge and great respect to my parents, my wife and children for their kind love, understanding, encouragement, faith, hope and most importantly to allow me to sacrifice their time for the purpose of my studies.

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.

**TABLE OF CONTENT**

<b>TOPIC</b>	<b>PAGE</b>
DECLARATION	ii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	iii
ABSTRAK	iv
ABSTRACT	v
TABLE OF CONTENT	vi
LIST OF TABLES	ix
LIST OF FIGURES	x
CHAPTER 1	
1.0 Introduction	1
1.1 The Definition of Attitudes	2
1.2 The Definition of Motivation	3
1.3 Background of the Problem	4
1.4 Purpose of the Study	6
1.5 Rationale of the Study	7
1.6 Significance of the study	7
1.7 Aims and Justification of the Study	8
1.8 Objectives of the Study	8

1.9	Research Questions	9
1.10	Hypothesis and Assumption of the Study	9
1.11	Limitation of the Study	9
1.12	Definition of Terms	10
<b>CHAPTER 2</b>	<b>REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE</b>	
2.0	Introduction	12
2.1	Local Studies on Attitudes and Motivation in ESL	13
2.2	Foreign Studies on Attitudes and Motivation in ESL	22
2.3	Summary of Related Literature	40
<b>CHAPTER 3</b>	<b>RESEARCH METHODOLOGY</b>	
3.0	Introduction	41
3.1	Population of Sampling	42
3.2	Research Instrument	45
3.3	Validation Procedure of Instrument	46
3.4	Collection of Data	46
3.5	Method of Data Analysis	47
3.6	Summary	48
<b>CHAPTER 4</b>	<b>FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION</b>	
4.0	Introduction	49
4.1	Respondents' Background	50
4.2	Items Analysis on Students' Attitude of Learning ESL	54
4.3	Items Analysis on Students' Motivation of Learning ESL	60



4.4	Items Analysis on the Relationship Between Students' Attitudes and Motivation with their Achievement	67
4.5	Items Analysis on Students' Learning Preferences	71
4.6	Discussion	75
4.7	Summary	79

## CHAPTER 5 CONCLUSION, IMPLICATION AND RECOMMENDATION

5.0	Introduction	80
5.1	Conclusions	81
5.2	Implications	84
5.3	Recommendations	85
5.4	Suggestion for Further Research	87

BIBLIOGRAPHY	88
--------------	----

### APPENDIX A The Questionnaire

### APPENDIX B The Research Schedule

### APPENDIX C The Frequency Counts of the Questionnaire

### APPENDIX D Letter of Approval to conduct the Survey

**LIST OF TABLES****PAGE**

1. Table 3.1(a) Distribution of Respondents by course.	43
2. Table 3.1(b) Distribution of Respondents by percentage.	43
3. Table 3.1(c) Distribution of Respondents by Gender.	44
4. Table 3.4 The Administration of Questionnaire by Course.	47
5. Table 4.1 Respondents' Background.	51
6. Table 4.2 Item Analysis on Students' Attitudes Based on High and Low Ratings.	59
7. Table 4.3 Item Analysis on Students' Motivations Based on High and Low Ratings	64
8. Table 4.4 Item Analysis on Relationship between Attitudes and Motivation to Students' Achievement.	69



**LIST OF FIGURES****PAGE**

1. Figure 4.1 (a) Level of Parent's Education. 52
2. Figure 4.1 (b) Students' age 53
3. Figure 4.3 (c) English Result for SPM. 53
4. Figure 4.2.1 English is the most important language for communication. 55
5. Figure 4.2 Students' Response on Attitudes. 60
6. Figure 4.3 Students' Response on Motivation 65
7. Figure 4.3.8 Family and friends always encourage me to learn English. 65
8. Figure 4.4.4 I always have good grade in my oral presentations. 69
9. Figure 4.4 Students' response on their achievement 70
10. Figure 4.5.3 I don't like my teacher to correct my mistake in front of the class. 72

## **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 have seen the emergence of Kurikulum Baru Sekolah Menengah (KBSM) in 1988 and English is used in teaching mathematics and science subject for Year One, Form One and Lower Six in all Malaysian schools 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.

**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.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

#### 2.0 Introduction

Most motivation theorists assume that attitudes and motivation are involved in the performance of all learned responses. This is based on the premise, a learned behaviour will not occur unless it is energized. The major question among psychologists, in general, is whether attitudes and motivation are a primary or secondary influence on behaviour. That is, are changes in behaviour better explained by principles of environmental or ecological influences, perception, memory, cognitive development, emotion, explanatory style, or personality or are concepts unique to motivation more pertinent (Huitt, W., 2001).

Eventually, in second or foreign language (L2) learning a major concern among researchers has been to the role played by attitudinal and motivational factors in L2 learning. These factors are deep in the students' minds and need to be sorted out in order to improve their learning process. One important issue discussed in this area by researchers is "how the student's cultural background relates to the background or

differences projected by the second language culture” (Cook, 2001, p 119). The level of relationship between students’ own cultural background and the background projected by the L2 culture often influences their attitudes toward L2 in particular and toward their motivation to learn in general.

On the other hand, Gardner (1985, p. 84) speculates that “If attitudes and motivations influence how well someone learns a second language, is it not equally possible that the experience of learning a second language influences the attitudes and motivations?” In explaining the above question, he stresses that there are many other aspects underlie the attitudes and motivation and these aspects might involved personality determinants, pedagogical techniques, teacher variables and etc.

### **2.1 Local Studies on Attitudes and Motivation in ESL**

Through out the eighties to the present, many studies have been carried out by local researchers in this area. Mostly, the studies conducted were focussed on the attitude of the students towards the learning English language and factors that contribute or influenced the students in their study.

Chandrasegaran (1980) has conducted a study on students’ attitudes towards English in Johor and he found that generally the students’ attitudes were favourable. From the study, students have shown some positive attitudes towards learning the language and there exists a correlation between attitudes and competence. Anyhow the finding was insufficient to be accepted as evidence of a definite relationship.