

ATTITUDES AND MOTIVATION TOWARDS ENGLISH LANGUAGE AMONG SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS IN RURAL AREA.

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ABSTRACT: *Attitudes and motivation are key factors to successful second language acquisition. This research is conducted to investigate attitudes and motivation of secondary school students in rural area towards English language learning. This research has utilized the quantitative method through a set of questionnaires given to the respondents as the instrument for the data collection. The respondents involved in this research are 60 students varied from all forms of Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan Jalan Kebun (SMKJK). Based on this research, the results have revealed the main objectives and questions proposed. Specifically, the findings have shown that the respondents basically have positive attitudes towards English language learning. The respondents are also found to be more extrinsically motivated in their English language learning. However, the respondents highly agreed that they put low efforts in their English language learning.*

Keywords: Attitudes; Motivation; English Language

1. INTRODUCTION

Coping with the world nowadays whereby English language has become as a powerful tool to reduce the educational, economic and social gaps among people, it is especially vital to master the language. Advancing in the technology innovation is one of the examples that the students must indeed need to have a good command of English language. For example, if the students were to use the computer and internet, they need to know English better because all these computer instructions are written in English. Apart from that, if the students were to browse for information, they also need to know English language because most of the information is greatly taken from the international sources. Even if the students were to play games online, they must also have good English language command because most of instructions of games are also written in English. Apart from that, having good English command is also necessary for every Malaysian student as it would assist in their daily activities, conversation and even for the use of their future jobs. This basically has been stated in the Malaysian Curriculum standards (2013) where the emphasis for English education is to produce students who will have an adequate English knowledge so that they can survive in this era of globalization.

Though English language is important and it has its place as a second language in Malaysia, English language teaching and learning in the classroom still has its obstacles to its success of implementation. This is because to produce students who are good in English command, it depends on the students themselves mainly on their attitudes and motivation towards English language learning. As stated by [1] they found that "success in learning a second language depends upon many factors such as learning style, motivation as well as the attitude to learn the language". [2] also strongly believed that "attitudes give a great influence in the students' achievement and not that their intellectual capacity". Meanwhile, [3] affirmed that those who have positive attitudes will potentially influence their success in their second language learning. Other study also found that learners with negative attitudes will feel anxious in their learning, therefore it will cause them to be unmotivated and they are eventually unsuccessful in their learning [4]. Therefore, some of these findings indicate that attitudes and motivation are two important factors in English language learning.

2. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Talking about English language learning, most students from rural area seem to be unable to perform well in this subject matter. This is illustrated by [5], that the failure rate of the English subject among the students from rural area is quite high. Hence, most of the rural area students are low achievers in English language. This suggests that many students of the rural area schools are unable to get good grades in the English subject and of most of them tend to fail the course. The two elements for their failure in the subject are found to be related to their attitudes and motivation towards learning the English language. As suggested by [6] "the two factors that cause the students to have low proficiency and passing rates of English language learning are their attitudes and motivation". It somehow suggests that those students who have high motivation and positive attitudes would get better grades for their English subject as compared to those who have low motivation and negative attitudes.

This was also suggested by [3] that "those students with negative attitudes and low level of motivation will experience unsuccessful learning as compared to those learners with positive attitudes and high motivation level". It indicates that attitudes and motivation need to coexist in order for every learner to achieve success in their learning. [7] in their study also discovered that that the students who have good proficiency in English language are those who have better motivation and attitudes in learning the language. Attitudes and motivation have been proven by many researchers that it gives great influence in the process of language learning. Hence, this study seeks to look into these issues regarding students' attitudes and motivation towards English Language especially in the rural area.

3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The three main objectives of this research are:

- 1) To study attitudes of the secondary school students in the rural area school towards English language learning.
- 2) To study motivation of the secondary school students in the rural area school towards English language learning.

- 3) To study the efforts taken by the secondary school students in the rural area school towards English language learning.

4. METHODOLOGY

This research was conducted using quantitative method. This technique was selected because to some extent, it was appropriate to use quantitative technique in measuring secondary students' attitudes and motivation towards English language learning in the rural area school as it involved a large number of participants. Since the respondents involved were 60 secondary students of SMK Jalan Kebun, this quantitative technique is deemed the most suitable as it would help to measure a wide range of the students' attitudes and motivation towards English language learning. The students were selected randomly from all of the forms which were students ranging from form 1 until form 5 to answer distributed questionnaires. Therefore, a wide range of attitudes and motivation of the secondary school students towards English language learning can be measured from all levels. Apart from that, the participants involved also had different English language proficiency levels. Some of them had pass grades during the recent English language test while some of them had failed in their English language test. This was also chosen as to see either those who with higher or lower achievement or in English language test have different attitudes and motivation towards English language or not.

Instrument used in this study was questionnaires that had been adapted from the English version of Gardner's (2004) the Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) [8]. The questionnaires covered 25 questions in the form of Likert-scale that required the participants to rate their preference for each question from scale strongly disagree, disagree, mixed feelings, agree to strongly agree. After the data had been collected, the data was being analyzed accordingly. The data was transferred and analyzed separately according to sections of the questionnaires.

5. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Attitudes of the Students towards English Language Learning

[9] suggested that attitude is "a hypothetical construct". It means that we simply cannot observe attitudes directly; however attitudes can be inferred from individuals' self reports and behaviours. Bem (1970) defined attitude as "either to like or to dislike" whereby [10] also had a similar definition of attitudes as "psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favor or disfavour". In short, these researchers found that attitudes are more likely something that can trigger individual to like and dislike particular things, events and anything. According to [11], "positive language attitudes let learner have positive orientation towards English learning". This implies that those who have positive attitudes in their language learning are more successful in their learning.

From the data collected, it is found that most of the students do agree that English is an important part of the school curriculum as it has the highest mean among others which is 4.48. This shows that the students are aware of the

importance of English language. Apart from that, most of the students also agree that they find learning English is very interesting as it has the second highest mean among the others which is 4.32. However, only a few number of students feel that they really enjoy learning English, as the statement get the lowest mean of 3.1. This shows that even though the students find English is very interesting, they do not really enjoy learning the subject. This may be because of difficulties in understanding English language due to language barrier such as restricted English vocabulary that they have and complex structures of the English language which differs from their mother tongue. In this case, the English teachers should play the vital role to assist the student to enjoy learning English more by making sure that every student has understood thoroughly things that they have learnt. The students mostly have the tendency to lose the fun feeling when learning something that they do not understand or something that they do not know. Thus, it is important to keep the students on the track so they are engaging to the lesson.

In addition, most of the students also stated that they hardly ever read English newspapers and magazines (mean: 3.38) and they have difficulties in doing English exercises (mean: 3.52). This could also be probably because they have not yet mastered the English language, so they find it difficult for them to understand the materials written in English that they read. Interestingly, the students disagree that they feel stress (mean: 2.53) or bored in learning English (mean: 2.82). Looking at this finding, it is found that the students have a more positive attitude towards English language. This might be due to the fact that they are aware of the importance of English language even though they have difficulties in understanding the language.

Motivation of the Students in English Language Learning

From the data collected, intrinsic and extrinsic motivations of students towards English language learning are also measured. [1] suggested intrinsic motivation refers to doing something because it is inherently interesting or enjoyable. [12] believed that intrinsic motivation is basically "the need to know, curiosity and state of being competent or growth that the learners develop within themselves". Due to this curiosity, it drives the learners to have motivation in learning, without the influence of external forces. Extrinsic motivation on the other hand comes from the anticipation of reward that ones will get in doing a particular thing [13]. These rewards could be tangible and intangible. Some of the rewards that people pursue are money, status, position, gifts, good grades or better jobs.

For intrinsic motivation, it is found that the highest mean is that the students agree to the statement that they wish they are fluent in English language (mean: 3.3) and they also wish they could read newspaper and magazines in English language (mean: 3.53). The students also stated that they have a strong desire to learn English (mean: 3.13). This finding indicates that the students are motivated to learn English language and acquire the language, however difficulties in comprehending the language might impede the teaching and learning process.

For extrinsic motivation, it is found that the highest mean which is, 4.28 is that majority of the students agree to the statement of studying English is important because they will need it for their career. From this statement, it is observed that the students are extrinsically motivated because they perceive English as important for their future career. The second highest mean (4.18) is that the students mostly agreed to the statement of studying English is important because it will make them more educated. This revelation also indicates that the students are extrinsically motivated to learn English as they would be seen more educated if they know the English language. This is another external factor that influences the students to learn English due to the reward that they will get. This reward comes in the form of perception of the society that perceives those with good English command as people who are more educated. In addition, the students also indicated that another external force that drives them to learn English is their English teacher (mean: 4.15). This illustrates that English teachers ought to have dynamic and interesting teaching styles as this strength highly attributes to the students' willingness and motivation to learn English. Besides that, students also asserted that their parents rarely encourage them to practice English as much as possible (mean: 3.3) and their parents never stress the importance English will have for them when they leave school (mean: 3.37). This might be due to the reason that the parents are living in the rural area whereby they do not use English much in their daily conversation. For the intrinsic motivation analysis, it is found that 4 out of 10 statements of intrinsic motivation, the respondents moderately agree that they have intrinsic motivation towards English language learning. As for the extrinsic motivation analysis, it is found that 6 out of 10 statements, the respondents highly agree to the statements that they are extrinsically motivated towards English language learning. From this finding, it is evidently shown that most of the students are basically extrinsically motivated towards English language learning.

Students' Efforts in English Language Learning

From the data collected, the students' efforts in English language learning are also measured. It is found that that they do not pay attention to the feedback they receive in their English class (mean: 3.48). This demonstrates that the students put little efforts to work on the feedback that they receive in their English class. They also do not bother to check their returned assignments or homework that they get from their English teacher (mean: 3.43). This finding reveals that the students put less effort to check their assignments once they are returned by their English teacher. Moreover, the students also agreed that they rarely make a point to try to understand the English words that they hear and see (mean: 3.42). This implies that the students are hardly making any efforts to search for the definition of difficult words that they encounter. Therefore, this indicates that the students have low efforts to learn English language which it can relate to their poor English grade achievements whereby 33 % students scored grade C and 30 % students scored D for English subject during their recent mid-year examination.

6. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, three main research questions have been answered through this research conducted. The first research question has been evidently answered that most of the students in this study have positive attitudes towards English language learning. The students acknowledged the importance of acquiring the English language and believed the subject is interesting even though they face difficulties in comprehending the language. The second question that is to search for the students' motivation in learning English language has also been answered through the tabulation of the analyzed data. Most of the students are found to be more extrinsically motivated in their English language learning as they are driven by external forces such as their English teachers and their needs to learn English for the future career. The third research question which is intended to examine the efforts taken by the students in their English language learning has also revealed that most of the students put forth very little efforts in their English language learning.

Some suggestions can be applied to increase the students' intrinsic motivation and their efforts in the English language learning. As reported, most of the respondents are extrinsically motivated; this shows that they have lack of intrinsic motivation. Therefore, it is best for the English teachers to nurture the students' interest especially in learning English language by exposing various interesting methods to learn English. Besides that, the English teachers can also help the students to increase their efforts in learning English by guiding them to double-check their homework after it has been returned. This is to ensure the students learn thoroughly their mistakes done. It is hoped that this study can help English teachers in acknowledging the students' attitudes and motivation towards English language learning so they may take suitable measures to help the students in learning English. As asserted by Kong[14] in his study, "teachers are important as they the ones who lead the students to the right path and make the students wanting to learn". Hence teachers play vital roles in the lives of the students in their classrooms. Tven *et. al* [15] asserted that the behaviour patterns of teachers can have an effect towards the behaviour patterns of students. Apparently, when the students perceive their teacher cares and pays attention to them, the students will be more motivated to learn. Therefore, students are more likely to concentrate on the lesson and consequently improve their learning ability. This illustrates that when the students develop personal and positive connection to the teacher and receives more guidance, praise and constructive feedback rather than criticism and negative punishment from the teacher, the students are more likely to be engaged in their learning and also display better classroom behaviour. This indicates that teaching and learning that is based on the concept of love is fundamental in fostering positive attitude and enhancing students' motivation towards learning.

Opuni [16] in his study also found that teachers' behaviour significantly affects students' attitudes and motivation towards the lesson. The study sought to improve students' achievement and curb students' disciplines problems by enhancing teacher levels of caring and fairness. Two intervention schools and a comparable non-participating school were monitored over a two-year period. The finding revealed that the two intervention schools achieved higher

and statistically significant students' academic achievement and the level of disciplinary problems and unruly behaviours among the students were also lower as compared to the non-participating school. This implies that teachers' concerned and caring behaviour plays a huge role in nurturing students' positive attitude and motivation towards the subject.

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