



Motivation and Attitude in Learning English among UiTM Students in the Northern Region of Malaysia

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to describe the relationship between the students' motivation and attitude and their English Language performance. The subjects were the part two students from three UiTM campuses in the Northern Region. The research tool used was in the form of a questionnaire. The mean scores analysis of the motivation and performance revealed that the students were more extrinsically than intrinsically motivated when learning English. However, the one-way ANOVA test showed that there is no significant difference. To test the students' attitudes and their performance, the Spearman Rho Rank-Order Correlation Coefficient was used and the analysis revealed a significant correlation between attitude and achievement. The one-way ANOVA also showed that there is a significant difference. The mean scores was used to find out whether there is any difference between the respondents of different gender and their attitude in learning English. The results showed the existence of significant difference.

Keywords: Extrinsic Motivation, Intrinsic Motivation, Overall Motivation, Attitude Variable, English Language Performance

1. Introduction

University Teknologi MARA (UiTM) is one of the tertiary institutions in Malaysia that offers various English courses to its students. At the diploma level, semester one students of any discipline are required to take a course called Preparatory English or better known as BEL 100. It consists of six contact hours per week which is equivalent to three credit hours per semester. This course is aimed at improving students' proficiency level and designed to prepare them

for Mainstream English Courses at UiTM that covers Grammar, Reading, Writing, and Speaking. By the end of the course, students should be able to use the skills acquired in the respective components in communicating effectively. The lack of interest among UiTM diploma students in learning English has become a major concern among English Language lecturers because the students are supposed to excel in this subject since the medium of instruction in UiTM is English.

There have been many studies conducted to identify the factors that contribute to the decline of students' academic performance. Lunn (1971), Nooman (1976), Levine (1980), White (1982), Astone and McLanahan (1991) had documented the relationship between the social economic status (SES) and school achievement. The studies done by Koh Boh Boon (1976), Rumberger (1983), Walberg (1985) and Stevenson (1987) reported that parental involvement has a significant relationship with the students' academic achievement.

However, to the researchers, the students' orientations, attitudes and individual personal characteristics are more of their concern since they believe that these students may have been influenced by certain factors or developed certain kind of attitudes. Furthermore, studies done by Adnan (1985) and Nor Azmi (1995) on daily rural school students revealed that there is a significant relationship between the students' attitudes and their English Language achievement. If the UiTM students were tested on their attitudes and motivation toward learning English Language, will the same results prevail?

There have been some opinions that if a student does not feel the need of acquiring the second language to function either within or outside his/her community, most probably this student will have a negative attitude and will not be interested in learning the language (Baker, 1988). By focusing on attitude and motivation, the researcher is not trying to denigrate the importance of other variables, but rather to allow for a more detailed, focused look at both.

The objectives of this study are three-folds, namely to identify the key motivating factors for learners, to investigate the extent the learners' attitudes towards English affect their performance and to investigate if there are any significant differences among the groups studied.

2. Method

A correlational research design was used. The motivation, attitude, and personal characteristics variables, as measured by a self-report questionnaire, function as the independent variables and the English Language performance, measured by the UiTM Preparatory English (BEL100) examination result, as the dependent variable (Figure 1).

2.1 Sampling design

The subjects were 139 students from the Perlis Campus, 248 from the Kedah Campus and 233 from the Pulau Pinang Campus. The selection criterion used in attaining the samples was to choose those students who had just received their BEL100 examination result regardless of their status whether as the first timer or repeater for that particular paper.

2.2 Questionnaire

The research instrument used in this research was in the form of a questionnaire. All subjects were asked to complete a questionnaire that comprised questions on personal characteristics, motivation and attitudes. The instrument was adopted and adapted from Gardner and Lambert (1972) so that it is more appropriate, intelligible and meaningful for the sample concerned. The reliability test of the instrument produced a Cronbach Alfa of 0.757, which was satisfactory and acceptable.

2.3 Data analysis

The data collected were computed and analyzed using the SPSS 12. Each student's score on the questionnaire was matched to his or her BEL100 examination grade. The statistical procedures used in this study were the descriptive statistics – mean and standard deviation scores, frequency and percentage, t-test, Spearman Rho Rank-Order Correlation Coefficient, and ANOVA.

3. Results

3.1 English language performance

Out of 620 respondents, 18.7% of the respondents received an A, 53.2% of the respondents received a B, 27.9% of the respondents received a C and only 0.16% of the respondents received a D. Based on the percentages, most respondents received a B grade for BEL 100 and out of the three campuses (Kedah campus, P. Pinang campus and Perlis campus), only 1 respondent failed. It can be said that the respondents from the Northern region campuses have good English language performance.

In terms of the distribution of BEL 100 result according to program, out of 9 programs (DIA, DBS, DIB, DPA, DIDE, DIM, EE, EM, EC), the highest number of respondents who received an A came from the DBS program (31.3%, n=31), followed by the respondents from the DIA program (27.45, n=20). The respondents from the DIDE program has the lowest number of As (7.1%, n=3). This shows that generally, respondents from the DBS program are the best compared to the respondents from the other programs.

In terms of the respondents' family income, 118 respondents came from low-income families (RM 500 and below), while 83 respondents came from high-income families (RM1501 – 2000). Out of 116 respondents who received an A, 31.9% came from high-income families (RM1501 – 2000). 10.3% of the respondents came from a family with an income range of RM 1001 – 1500 and RM 501 – 800. Majority of the respondents who received an A came from a high-income family (RM 1501 and above). Out of 173 respondents who received a C, 28.9% came from a low-income family (RM500 and below). Only 1 respondent received a D and he/she came from a low income family.

Out of 116 respondents who received an A, 77 (22.38%) respondents were female while only 39(14.13%) respondents were male. 209 (60.76%) female respondents and 121 (43.84%) male respondents received a B. As for the C grade, majority of the respondents were males, $n=115(41.67\%)$. The respondent who received a D was a male. It can be concluded that female respondents did better in BEL 100 than their male counterparts.

3.2 Motivation in learning English

The mean computed for Intrinsic Motivation is 2.915 and the mean for Extrinsic Motivation is 3.429. Therefore, it can be concluded that the respondents are more Extrinsically Motivated than Intrinsically Motivated in learning English.

The means of Extrinsic Motivation and Intrinsic Motivation for both male and female respondents are almost the same which are $M = 3.44$, $M = 3.44$ and $M = 2.90$, $M = 2.93$, respectively. Hence, it can be concluded that the respondents of different gender do not differ in their motivation in learning English. The results also revealed that the means of Extrinsic Motivation for both male and female are higher than the means of Intrinsic Motivation.

The one-way ANOVA was used to test the significant difference between gender and the motivation in learning English revealed the critical value of $F = 2.70$ (at $\alpha = .05$) For the Intrinsic Motivation versus gender, $F = .059$, Extrinsic Motivation versus gender, $F = 1.627$, and for the Overall Motivation versus gender, $F = 1.46$. The obtained values are less than the critical value of F , thus, it can be concluded that there is no significant difference between the Intrinsic Motivation, Extrinsic Motivation and Overall Motivation and gender.

From the data computed, the means for Intrinsic Motivation and Extrinsic Motivation of the respondents who received an A (high achievers) for BEL 100 are $M = 2.92$ and $M = 3.46$ respectively. As for the respondent who received a D for BEL 100, the means for Intrinsic Motivation and Extrinsic Motivation are $M = 2.00$ and $M = 2.50$ respectively. From the values, we can conclude that the respondents who obtained an A (high achievers) are more extrinsically motivated in learning English compared to the respondent who obtained a D (low achiever).

3.3 Correlation between motivation in learning English and their English language performance

The Spearman Rho rank-order correlation coefficient statistical test was used to find out whether there exists any correlation between the independent variable and the dependent variable. There is a very weak relationship between Intrinsic Motivation and English language performance, which is $-.020$. The one-way ANOVA test was used. The critical value of F at $\alpha = .05$ is 2.70. The obtained F value for Intrinsic Motivation versus BEL 100 is 1.63, which is less than the critical value. Thus, it is justified that there is no significant difference between Intrinsic Motivation and English language performance.

The same conclusion can be made for Extrinsic Motivation and English language performance. This is due to the computed value for the correlation test which is $-.043$ and the obtained value of F for the one-way ANOVA, 2.39.

There is no significant difference between Overall Motivation (Intrinsic Motivation and Extrinsic Motivation) and English language performance. This is based on the computed values for the correlation test and the one-way ANOVA, $-.034$ and $F = 2.60$ respectively. It was proven in this study that the influence of motivation is not a direct one.

3.4 The respondents' attitude in learning English and their English language performance

The Spearman Rho rank-order correlation coefficient test showed there exists a significant correlation ($\alpha = .01$) between the attitude in learning English and English language performance, which is $-.152$. The obtained F value from the one-way ANOVA test is 6.66, which is greater than the critical value. This further justifies that there is a significant difference between the attitude in learning English and English language performance. Even when the mean scores of the respondents' attitudes were computed (respondents who received an A, $M = 3.06$, respondents who received a B, $M = 2.99$, respondents who received a C, $M = 2.93$, respondent who received a D, $M = 2.80$), it can be concluded that the respondents who obtained an A (high achievers) have better attitude in learning English compared to the low achievers.

3.5 Attitude in learning English between male and female

The mean for male respondents is 2.95, while the mean for female respondents is 3.01. Comparing the two means, the female respondents' mean is slightly higher than the male respondents'. Therefore, the female respondents have slightly better attitude in learning English compared to the male respondents.

4. Conclusion

This study concludes that the intrinsic and extrinsic motivation does not have a direct influence on students' English

language performance due to their very weak relationship. In addition, the students' attitude does affect their language performance.

Based on these findings, the English teacher should generate a conducive class environment to enhance language learning and to promote positive attitude in learning. Educators should also motivate the students during the first meeting by encouraging them to learn English, frequently reminding them of the importance of mastering English; to attain their personal goals such as to further studies, travel abroad, prepare for the working world and be able to access the world of ICT. The administrator should introduce the study skills programs to the students especially the new ones to develop positive attitudes, to boost their self-esteem and change their perceptions of learning English. This is due to the fact that some of the respondents are not aware of the purpose of learning English and learn it because others are learning and it is required in the system. A mini survey to identify the students' attitude and perceptions of learning English during the first class should be conducted to prepare the educators as what to expect from the students in their language classes.

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INDEPENDENT
VARIABLES

DEPENDENT
VARIABLE

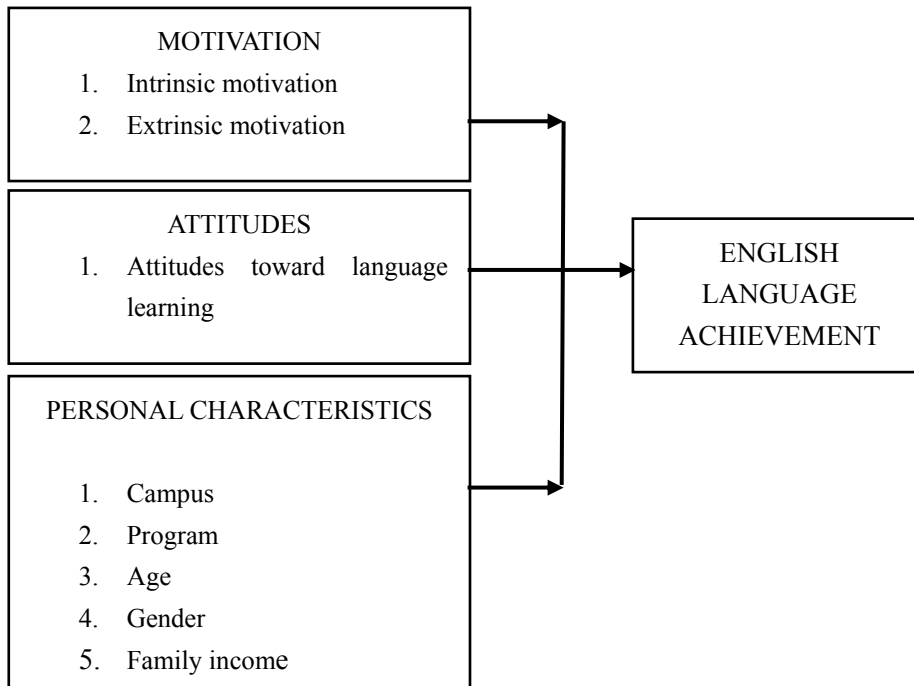


Figure 1. Theoretical Framework - The proposed model shows the relationship between the independent variables and dependent variable.