

# Attitudes and Motivation of Students towards English Language Learning

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**Abstract**—This survey research aimed to investigate students' attitudes and motivations towards learning English as a second language. The respondent of this study consist of 90 Year 4 students in one school at Kapit, Sarawak. Questionnaire was used in this survey. The findings revealed that both male and female students have positive attitudes towards English language learning. Besides that, female students have a high motivation compared to male students where female students hold 66.7% while male students hold 33.3% of motivation.

**Index Terms**— Attitudes; instrumental motivation; integrative motivation; second language; L2

## I. INTRODUCTION

English language is a worldwide language used by people from different background and mother tongue all over the world to communicate with each other. In Malaysia, English had been taught in school as the second language since primary school. Unfortunately, students are still facing difficulties in English language proficiency and communication skills. This situation has open the eyes of many researchers about learning a second language (L2) especially in Malaysia. They agreed that the main point which influence students' proficiency in the learning of second language are attitude and motivation. Gardner and Lambert have discover two different kind of motivation which are integrative and instrumental.

Integrative motivation means the learner's willingness and effort to become part of the member of the other community of language and also to learn the language for communication (Gardner & Lambert, 1972). Gardner (1982) stated that integrative motivation represent an interest in L2, which include their willingness and attitude to learn the other language, learning situation, and the target language community.

Besides that, Gardner & Lambert (1972) stated that instrumental motivation can be defined as a willingness to raise social attention and advantages in economic field. Johnson (2001) defined instrumental motivation as a person interest in learning second language for the sake of money, job, and self-satisfaction.

It is not necessary for L2 learners to choose which motivation that suite them because both are equally important. A learner can become either integrative or instrumental oriented, or maybe both (Cook, 1991). Various studies had been conducted on attitudes and motivation with

the aim to identify the students' attitudes and motivation toward learning a second language.

In the Malaysian educational system, English is one of the major subjects in primary and secondary school. The English language subject was made compulsory at each grade level either in primary or secondary school as well as in the Malaysian educational system. Unfortunately, many previous research have revealed that students in Malaysia still having problem in mastering English language.

Actions have been taken to overcome this issue. In 2003, the Ministry of Education has took an action by switching the teaching of Mathematics and Science from Bahasa Melayu to English. However, the policy was a failure because students were unable to understand terms which are written in English. Thus, the focus of this study was to examine the attitude and motivation of students in primary school towards English language learning. The research questions were

1. What is the students' attitude towards English language learning?
2. What is the students' motivation in the learning of the English language?
3. What is the students' integrative motivation in the learning of the English language?
4. What is the students' instrumental motivation in the learning of the English language?

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### A. Attitude

Attitude is a natural act in language learning. Ajzen (2005) as cited in Bayan (2018) briefly defined attitude as a person act toward a situation they are facing either in positive or negative way. According to Youssef (2012), an individual can have a positive or negative attitude towards a language they learn. In learning a second language, a person with positive attitude always has a strong desire to learn the language while negative attitude of a person learns for the sake to take control over people in the community. Youseff (2012) as cited in Yvonne & Gurnam (2013) stated that attitude is important in learning language in order to become useful to the nation.

### B. Motivation

According to Gardner & Lambert (1972), there are two types of motivation, integrative and instrumental. Integrative motivation represents learners' interest on different language and culture. Instrumental motivation trigger for some reason such as money, job, self-satisfaction and so on. Learners can have either integrative or instrumental motivation or both

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motivation in them. Self-determination is the main key in learning second language which led to intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Dornyei (1994) stated that a person with intrinsic motivation tend to learn a second language for enjoyment and curiosity satisfaction. On the other hand, extrinsic motivation person is the one who learn to gain reward and avoiding punishment.

### III. METHODOLOGY

This study used survey design. It was conducted in a school at Kapit, Sarawak. The sample consisted of 90 students in Primary 4 in one selected school in Kapit. The samples was selected from three classes where each class was a streaming classes.

Questionnaire was used in this study which was adapted from Gardner's Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) (Gardner, 1985). The original 6 point Likert Scale format was adapted to 5 point scale. The main focus of this study is to determine the types of motivational orientations and also the student's attitudes toward the language learning.

The questionnaire consists of 5 parts. Part 1 explore the background of the respondents. Part 2 and 3 content items on students' attitude towards English language learning, while Part 4 and 5 content items on students' integrative and instrumental motivation. All items were ranked from 1 to 5 Likert Scale with the starting point of "1- Strongly Disagree" and the point of "5- Strongly Agree". Researcher went into each class to distribute the questionnaire and explain about each question. Students were given some time to think and give their answer. All the data collected was analyzed in percentage using SPSS system.

TABLE I. STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARD ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING

No.	Statements	Strongly Disagree		Slightly Disagree		Slightly Agree		Moderately Agree		Strongly Agree	
		n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
1.	Q1	4	4.4	3	3.3	11	12.2	18	20.0	54	60.0
2.	Q2	4	4.4	5	5.6	20	22.2	24	26.7	37	41.1
3.	Q3	2	2.2	2	2.2	11	12.2	17	18.9	58	64.4
4.	Q4	3	3.3	4	4.4	13	14.4	22	24.4	48	53.3
5.	Q5	1	1.1	5	5.6	11	12.2	15	16.7	58	64.4

Table 2 shows the findings on students attitudes towards speakers of English. Based on the result, we can see that 33.3% of students were strongly disagree that Japan will be in a great loss if they had no contact with English-speaking countries. 55.6% of students were strongly agree with the statement that most native English speakers are so friendly while 40.0% of them strongly agree if they have many native English speaking friends. 54.4% of students were also strongly agree that we should be proud of native English speakers because they have contribute so much to the world while only 4.4% disagree with the statement.

### IV. FINDINGS

The respondents were given a survey questionnaire and asked to marked on a five point scale on each statement based on attitude and motivation items by Gardner and Lambert (1972). Their responses were analyzed in percentage using SPSS system. The result on attitude was illustrated in Table 1 and Table 2 while the result on motivation was illustrated in Table 3 and Table 4.

Based on Table 1, 60% of students strongly agreed that learning English is great while only 3.3% slightly disagreed on the statement. 41.1% of students strongly agreed that they enjoy learning English while 4.4% of students was slightly disagreed on the statement. For question number 3, we can see that 64.4% students strongly agreed while 2.2% remained slightly disagreed. 53.3% of students strongly agreed that they wanted to learn as much English as possible and 64.4% of students strongly agreed that they love learning English. Overall, the result showed that both male and female students have positive attitude towards English language learning.

For question no.5, about 53.3% of students strongly agree that native English speakers are very sociable and kind while 3.3% of them strongly disagree with the statement. 42.2% of students strongly agree that they would like to know more native English speakers and 48.9% strongly agree that the more they get to know native English speakers, the more they like them. Lastly, about 47.8% of overall students strongly agree that they can always put their trust on native English speakers.

TABLE II. STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS SPEAKERS OF ENGLISH LANGUAGE

No.	Statements	Strongly Disagree		Slightly Disagree		Slightly Agree		Moderately Agree		Strongly Agree	
		n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
1.	Q1	30	33.3	24	26.7	11	12.2	8	8.9	17	18.9
2.	Q2	4	4.4	7	7.8	15	16.7	14	15.6	50	55.6
3.	Q3	8	8.9	6	6.7	23	25.6	17	18.9	36	40.0
4.	Q4	4	4.4	1	1.1	14	15.6	22	24.4	49	54.4
5.	Q5	3	3.3	10	11.1	14	15.6	15	16.7	48	53.3
6.	Q6	5	5.6	6	6.7	17	18.9	24	26.7	38	42.2
7.	Q7	8	8.9	9	10.0	15	16.7	14	15.6	44	48.9
8.	Q8	5	5.6	6	6.7	22	24.4	14	15.6	43	47.8

Table 3 shows the questionnaire result on students' integrative motivation in the learning of English language. From the result we can see that 58 students or 64.4% of students were strongly agree that English is important so that they can be more at ease with people who speak English. In additional, 57.8% also strongly agree that studying English is important because it will allow them to meet and converse with more and varied people. 1.1% of students strongly

disagree that studying English is important to understand and appreciate the English way of life, while 41.1% of students were strongly agree with the statement. About 57 of overall students or 63.3% of students strongly agree that studying English is important so that they will be able to interact more easily with speakers of English while only 3.3% of students were strongly disagree with the statement.

TABLE III. STUDENTS' INTERGRATIVE MOTIVATION IN THE LEARNING OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

No.	Statements	Strongly Disagree		Slightly Disagree		Slightly Agree		Moderately Agree		Strongly Agree	
		n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
1.	Q1	4	4.4	7	7.8	11	12.2	10	11.1	58	64.4
2.	Q2	5	5.6	2	2.2	17	18.9	14	15.6	52	57.8
3.	Q3	1	1.1	6	6.7	17	18.9	29	33.2	37	41.1
4.	Q4	3	3.3	3	3.3	6	6.7	21	23.3	57	63.3

The findings on students' instrumental motivation in learning of the English language were illustrated in Table 4. From the table, it shows that 75.6% of students were strongly agree that studying English is important for their future career while find 2.2% stay as opponent of the statement. 56.7% of students were also strongly agree that studying English will make them more educated. For question no.3, about 63.3% or

57 students were strongly agree that studying English is useful in getting a good job while 3.3% remain strongly disagree. Finally, for question no.4, 60.0% of students were strongly agreed that studying English is important so that they will be respected by other people.

TABLE IV. STUDENTS' INSTRUMENTAL MOTIVATION IN THE LEARNING OF THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

No.	Statements	Strongly Disagree		Slightly Disagree		Slightly Agree		Moderately Agree		Strongly Agree	
		n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
1.	Q1	2	2.2	3	3.3	7	7.8	10	11.1	68	75.6
2.	Q2	3	3.3	3	3.3	15	16.7	18	20.0	51	56.7
3.	Q3	3	3.3	3	3.3	13	14.4	14	15.6	57	63.3
4.	Q4	7	7.8	5	5.6	7	7.8	17	18.9	54	60.0

### V. CONCLUSION

From the findings, it showed that both male and female students have positive attitude in learning English as a second language. It also showed that female students have a high motivation compared to male students. Students seem to realize the importance of English for their future. This was supported by Youseff (2012) who stated that attitude play an important role in learning language in order to become useful for the nation.

Hence, it is hoped that this study will provide useful input especially to our policy makers who hold a big responsibility in the education system. Besides that, it will also help educators to develop and enhance students' level of proficiency by encourage their positive attitude in learning English.

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