UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA

ANXIETY, ATTITUDE AND MOTIVATION AMONG FIRST YEAR UNDERGRADUATES IN LEARNING ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE

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ABSTRACT

Learning a second language is a rather challenging task as it not only requires a high tolerance of ambiguity but also high motivation low anxiety and a positive attitude. The objective of this study was to determine the anxiety, attitude and motivation levels among first year undergraduates in learning English as a Second Language (ESL) with regards to gender, academic discipline and language proficiency in an Institution of Higher Learning (IHL) where English is the medium of instruction. The study involved a total of 200 first year undergraduates from both Science and Non-Science majors from a Faculty of Education located in an IHL in Shah Alam. The data were collected using a questionnaire adapted from Gardner and Smythe's, Attitude Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) and semi-structured interviews. The findings indicated that the overall anxiety, attitude and motivation levels of the first year undergraduates were at moderate levels. Furthermore, it was found that the variables between anxiety and attitude, attitude and motivation have moderate relationship while a weak relationship was found between anxiety and motivation. The results further indicated that female undergraduates were less anxious, have more positive attitude and are more motivated compared to their male counterparts. However, no significant differences were recorded between the two groups. Meanwhile, no significant difference was found between Science and Non-Science students with regards to anxiety but a significant difference was recorded for attitude and motivation. Non-Science students exhibited lower anxiety levels, a more positive attitude and higher motivation in language learning when compared to Science major students. On the other hand, low proficiency level students were found to be less anxious and more motivated compared to the high and average proficiency level students but no significant differences were found. Low proficiency level students also recorded a significantly more positive attitude towards language learning when compared to students with high and average language proficiency. These findings imply that ESL classroom teachers at IHLs have to take into consideration the interplay of attitude, anxiety and motivation among the ESL learners. Focus must be given to the low proficiency students by encouraging and involving them in more meaningful English language activities. On the other hand, more motivation in form of praise and rewards can be offered to high and average proficiency students to help lower their anxiety levels.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

English language today is fast becoming an international language and has been used for many purposes by people all around the world. According to Kirkpatrick (2007), the rise of the English language all over the world was highly influenced by American English due to the aspects involving their political power (United States as a powerful nation), American culture, media (movies and music) as well as technological advancement and the rapid development in technology (computer and electronic devices).

The development of English language and its recognition as a world's lingua franca has resulted in its use by people of various native languages (Cruz-Ferreira & Abraham, 2006). English language is the third most widely spoken language in the world after Mandarin Chinese and Spanish (Marginson and Van Der Wende, 2007). Many countries use English language as a formal language for business, social and education in today's competitive world (Zajda, 2011).

In many Asian countries, mostly considered as the non English speaking countries, there exists a different national language. The English language is not the mother tongue but an additional language. In Malaysia, English was introduced in the 1700s during the British colonialism of South East Asia. Later in 1957, after Malaysia gained its independence, Bahasa Malaysia was designated as the national language of Malaysia while English language remained as a second language (Thang, 2005).

The implementation of Bahasa Malaysia (national language of Malaysia) as a medium of instruction in all public schools and some institutions of higher learning (IHL) for more than 20 years, witnessed the slow deterioration of English language proficiency among Malaysian students. The language learners' limited English language proficiency poses a challenge when they gain entry to an Institute of Higher Learning (IHL) where English language is used as the medium of instruction. In the university, English language subject is made compulsory in all faculties and students are required to pass the English paper prior to graduation. To add, the wide use of English language at the tertiary level in terms of reading and instructional materials is