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Attitude and motivation in spoken English among semester 4 students in a Malaysian Polytechnic - a correlational study

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Abstract

English language proficient has currently becoming a necessary requirement in various fields of study and professions. However, most students refuse to speak in English because they are too concerned in making mistakes, lack of motivation, and low self-confidence. In learning English, attitude and motivation are very closely related. A learner with positive attitude towards learning a language has a high tendency of motivation towards it. Therefore, the main objective of the research was to investigate the correlation between the items of attitude and motivation in spoken English among semester 4 students at Politeknik Sultan Mizan Zainal Abidin (PSMZA). The methodology used was quantitative method. This study was carried out using a questionnaire consisted of 70 items adapted from Gardner's Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) and was distributed to 100 semester 4 students from four departments of PSMZA. The data was analyzed using SPSS. Cohen's standard was used to evaluate the correlation coefficient, where items with 0.50 or larger were highlighted which represented a strong association. Findings had shown these students' attitude and motivation towards spoken English had strong correlation with some of the items that helped to boost their motivation in spoken English. These findings indicated the importance of different strategies to be implemented by the English language educators to enhance students' motivation in communicative English subjects.

Keywords: *attitude; motivation; spoken english*



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INTRODUCTION

The ability to speak fluently in the English language has played a crucial role in opening many possibilities for the students. Likewise, in the Tenth Malaysia Plan, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) has been emphasized with the objective to enhance the career opportunities for skilled workers. Skilled workers are expected to be equipped not only with hard skills, but also soft skills; the ability to speak fluently both first language and English as a second language so they could efficiently comprehend their working jobs. With the expansion of communicative components in English language subjects in Politeknik as one of the future national workers educational institution, the significance of spoken English among the students has been emphasized, with the goal of increasing communicative competence of the learners so as to attain the language through several purposes in TVET context.

To achieve the goal to develop students' communication skills, the attitude and motivation in spoken English are substantial to be identified by educators. This is because, according to Oller (1979,

p.138) "Attitudes are merely types of factors that give rise to motivation which eventually results in attainment of proficiency in a second language." Hence, apart from the syllabus aspect, educators should also pay attention on how to improvise their lesson based on students' motivation to enhance students' speaking proficiency. Correspondingly, educators could find more effective ways to increase students' motivation to speak English.

Research Objective

The objective of this research is to investigate the correlation between the items of attitude and motivation in spoken English among semester 4 students at Politeknik Sultan Mizan Zainal Abidin (PSMZA).

Research Questions

What is the correlation between the items of attitude and motivation in spoken English among semester 4 PSMZA students?

Problem Statement

Dalkılıç, N. (2013) reported there were many reasons for why EFL learners experience speaking anxiety such as fear of public speaking and concern of making mistakes because of limited grammatical knowledge and pronunciation, as they were afraid of being laughed at. In addition, Dalkılıç, N. also stated that learners decline to communicate in English due to shyness and low self-confidence.

According to Ruggiero (1998), if attitude was the main factor of students' reluctance to learn a second language, the most significant ways to enhance language education was not only increased funding, curriculum revision, or expanded technology, but to restore learners' attitudes to learn the language.

Thus, it can be assumed that learners with positive attitude towards spoken English will involve more in speaking activities and may try to make use of more strategies which can help them deal with their difficulties in the course of conversation; and learners with negative attitude will be less willing to participate in speaking activities.

METHODOLOGY

This research was a quantitative study. This study was conducted to identify students' attitude and motivation towards English speaking. To achieve this objective, questionnaire was used to collect the information from the participants. The participants in this study were engineering and information technology (IT) students from semester 4 in Politeknik Sultan Mizan Zainal Abidin (PSMZA). The departments involved in this study were Civil, Electrical and Mechanical Engineering and Information Technology and Communication. Stratified random sampling method was used in this research. 10% students from each departments were selected as the sampling with a total of 100 students from all four departments.

The questionnaire consisted of two sections: a) background information, and b) students' attitude and motivation towards speaking English, which contained 70 items. The participants were given 30 minutes to answer the questions. The questionnaires were then collected by the researcher upon completion.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire for this research was adapted from the Attitude and Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) which was originally developed by Gardner (1985a). To collect the data, the original 6-point Likert Scale format of AMTB was adapted to 4-point Likert Scale to reduce ambiguity of response.

In the original form, the scale ranged from strongly disagree, moderately disagree, slightly disagree, slightly agree, moderately agree, and strongly agree. The researcher used four-point of Likert Scale which only include "Strongly Disagree", "Disagree", "Agree", "Strongly Agree".

The other adaptations made included; removing negative worded statements, removing items that are not related to the focus of the study, adapt item to fit in Malaysia context. Two experienced English lecturers from PSMZA were asked to validate the questionnaire.

Data Analysis

The data obtained from the questionnaire were analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). To answer the research question Bivariate (Pearson) Correlation analysis was conducted to determine items correlated to assess the relationship between them. Cohen's standard was used to evaluate the correlation coefficient, where items with 0.50 or larger were highlighted which represented a strong association.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Background Information of the Students' Questionnaire

The first section of the questionnaire contained demographic information of the respondents. The following table represented the result of each item.

Table 1: Demographics of Respondents

	Number of Participants	%
Gender		
Male	56	56.0
Female	44	44.0
Age		
18-19	4	4.0
20-21	85	85.0
22-23	9	9.0
>23	2	2.0
Department		
Civil Engineering	22	22.0
Electrical Engineering	33	33.0
Mechanical Engineering	34	34.0
Information Technology and Communication	11	11.0

Attitude and Motivation in Spoken English

The second section of the questionnaire contained the items of attitude and motivation in spoken English. Bivariate (Pearson) correlations analysis was conducted to determine the items that correlate.

Table 2: Students' Attitude and Motivation Correlates with B1

No.	Items
B1	<i>I really enjoy speaking English.</i>
B11	<i>I really work hard to speak English.</i>
B42	<i>My English teacher is one of the most pleasant people I know.</i>
B67	<i>My parents think I should spend more time to learn English.</i>

Table 2 above showed that B1 correlated with B11, B42, and B67 with 0.529, 0.571 and 0.542. This correlation showed that when the students enjoyed speaking English, they would work hard to converse using the language. The students also had the opinion that their English teacher was one of the most pleasant people they had known, as well as their parents thought they should spend more time to learn English. These items were related to the learners' interest in language learning. As stated by Gardner (1985), interest was one of the most important motivations for learning English. Wilmomas (2013) supported by highlighting the importance of teacher to find out any possible factors which contributed to learners' motivation and interest in learning English.

Table 3: Students' Attitude and Motivation Correlates with B5

No.	Items
B5	<i>It is ok if someone asks me something in English.</i>
B23	<i>I make a point of trying to understand all the English that I see and hear.</i>
B40	<i>I look forward to go to my English class because my English teacher is motivating.</i>
B41	<i>My English teacher is very helpful.</i>
B46	<i>My English teacher allows us to use our mother tongue in the English class.</i>
B47	<i>I really like my English teacher.</i>
B50	<i>My English teacher is an interesting and creative person indeed.</i>

Table 3 above showed that B5 correlated with B23, B40, B41, B46, B47, and B50 with 0.506, 0.560, 0.581 and 0.567. As the students agreed that it was fine if someone asked them something in English, the students would make a point of trying to understand all the English language seen and heard. Also, the students look forward to go to their English class because their English teacher was motivating and very helpful, as well as allowed them to use their mother tongue during English class. The students also felt it was alright if someone asked them in English because they really liked their English teacher, and their English teacher was interesting and creative. These items showed that students who had a positive relationship with their teachers felt motivated to learn and supported. Melor M. Y et.al (2011) agreed that a positive relationship improved students' behavior and motivation to learn as well as their academic achievement.

Table 4: Students' Attitude and Motivation Correlates with B9

No.	Items
B9	<i>I would feel calm and sure of myself if I had to order a meal in English.</i>
B27	<i>I look forward to go to my English classes.</i>
B31	<i>I enjoy most of the activities done in my English class much more than those of my other classes.</i>
B46	<i>My English teacher allows us to use our mother tongue in the English class.</i>
B53	<i>Speaking English is important because I will need it for my career.</i>

Table 4 above shows that B9 correlated with B27, B31, B46, and B53 with 0.559, 0.530, 0.552 and 0.549. This meant that, when the students felt calm and sure of themselves if they had to order meal in English, they also looked forward to go to their English classes, and enjoyed most of the activities done during English class than other classes. Also, the students felt calm and sure of themselves because their English teacher allowed them to use their mother tongue during English class, and they agreed that speaking English was important since they needed it for their career. As claimed by Snezana Kirova et. al (2012), both self-esteem and anxiety had played a significant role for the second language learners. Thus, self-confidence, a good self-image and low anxiety were key factors that related to success in language learning.

Table 5: Students' Attitude and Motivation Correlates with B10

No.	Items
B10	<i>I will try hard to understand the more complex aspect of English.</i>
B13	<i>I speak English with my other lecturers in the college.</i>
B15	<i>When I speak English, I ignore distractions and pay attention to the task.</i>
B24	<i>I keep up to date with English language by working on it almost every day.</i>
B29	<i>I feel confident when I speak in my English class.</i>

Table 5 above showed that B10 correlated with B13, B15, B24, and B29 with 0.597, 0.595, 0.578 and 0.526. It showed that, when the students tried hard to understand more complex aspect of English language, the students would speak English with other lecturers, as well as ignored distractions while doing so and paid attention to the task. Also, the students kept up to date with English by working on it almost every day when they tried hard to understand the complexity of the language, and they felt confident when they spoke English during the lesson. Snezana Kirova et al (2012) in their research

agreed that in the English language learning process, the learners needed to participate more in learning activities so they could involve themselves more actively in the social context and made efforts to join with the group and they would experience more personal transformation.

Table 6: Students' Attitude and Motivation Correlates with B12

No.	Items
B12	<i>I would feel comfortable speaking English anywhere outside the classroom.</i>
B39	<i>English is one of my favorite courses.</i>
B42	<i>My English teacher is one of the most pleasant people I know.</i>
B47	<i>I really like my English teacher.</i>
B54	<i>Speaking English is important because it will allow me to meet and converse with more and varied people.</i>

Table 6 above showed that B12 correlated with B39, B42, B47, and B54 with 0.561, 0.507, 0.509, and 0.556. This meant that, when the students felt comfortable to speak English anywhere outside the classroom, the students also had English as one of their favourite courses, and their English teacher was one of the most pleasant persons they knew. Also, they really liked their English teacher, and had the opinion that speaking English was important because it allowed them to meet and speak with more and varied people. Gardner and Lambert 1972 stated that learners' high level of effort to learn the language was cost by their desire to be able to communicate with the group of community. This action was called integrative motivation which reflect the learners' willingness to be a representative member of other language community.

Table 7: Students' Attitude and Motivation Correlates with B13

No.	Items
B13	<i>I speak English with my other lecturers in the college.</i>
B10	<i>I will try hard to understand the more complex aspect of English.</i>
B51	<i>Speaking English is meaningful.</i>

Table 7 above showed that B13 correlated with B10, and B51 with 0.597 and 0.582. It showed that, when the students spoke English with other lecturers, they would try hard to understand the more complex aspect of English, and agreed that speaking English language was meaningful. All these items were linked to "willingness to communicate" (WTC). In a study carried out by Yashima et. al. (2004) showed that learners who had higher WTC scores tend to communicate more in class, willing to ask questions and often communicate with teachers outside the class. It seemed that learners who have interest to join international activities or occasion willing to communicate in English. Frequently, they were also volunteering to be engaged in communication.

Table 8: Students' Attitude and Motivation Correlates with B15

No.	Items
B15	<i>When I speak English, I ignore distractions and pay attention to the task.</i>
B10	<i>I will try hard to understand the more complex aspect of English.</i>
B49	<i>My English teacher present materials in an interesting way.</i>
B50	<i>My English teacher is an interesting and creative person indeed.</i>
B51	<i>Speaking English is meaningful.</i>
B53	<i>Speaking English is important because I will need it for my career.</i>
B59	<i>Speaking English is important because other people will respect me more if I know English.</i>

Table 8 above showed that B15 correlated with B10, B49, B50, B51, B53, and B59 with 0.595, 0.567, 0.559, 0.571, 0.590, and 0.588. This meant that, when the students spoke using English language, ignoring the distractions and focusing on the task, they would try hard to understand the more complex aspect of the language, as well as agreed that their English teacher presented materials in an interesting way. Also, the students found that their English teacher was interesting and creative, and speaking

English was meaningful and important because they would need it for their career. The students also thought that speaking English was important because other people would respect them more if they knew the language. Gardner and Lambert (1972) had acknowledged this matter in their study. According to their study, learners learned English language sometimes drawn by the desire to gain social recognition or economic advantages. It was called instrumental motivation.

Table 9: Students' Attitude and Motivation Correlates with B16

No.	Items
B16	<i>I wish I would have many English speaking friends.</i>
B28	<i>I pay much attention to the feedback I receive in my English class.</i>
B37	<i>I look forward to the time I spend in English class.</i>

Table 9 above showed that B16 correlated with B28 and B37 with 0.521 and 0.528. This meant that, when the students wished they would have many English speaking friends, they would pay much attention to the feedback they received during their English class, and they looked forward to the time they spent inside the English class. According to Shufen. H et. al (2010) peer support was very important to language learning because students spent most of their time together learning the language and experienced the challenges together. Peer support had better mutuality because they felt more comfortable and did not afraid of making mistakes when they were communicating with each other.

Table 10: Students' Attitude and Motivation Correlates with B17

No.	Items
B17	<i>I never daydream about dropping English class.</i>
B36	<i>I am glad to see other students speak English better than I do.</i>
B42	<i>My English teacher is one of the most pleasant people I know.</i>
B60	<i>My parents try to help me to speak English.</i>
B69	<i>My parents bought me many reference books to help me in improving my English.</i>

Table 10 above showed that B17 correlated with B17, B36, B42, B60, and B69 with 0.592, 0.517, 0.592 and 0.580. This meant that, when the students never thought of dropping the English subject, they were glad to see other students spoke the language better than them, as well as agreed that their English teacher was one of the most pleasant persons they knew. The students also believed that their parents tried to help them to speak English and bought many reference books to help them improved the language. Parents' contribution in developing students' attitude towards learning English was also important. According to Brendan Bartram (2006) attitude of a child was shaped by its own experience with the world combining with the explicit teaching and implicit modelling of parental attitude. Brendan reported that there were many ways parents could influence their children in language learning such as encouraging discussion in English, helping with homework, encouraging reading English materials and planning a holiday in target language country.

Table 11: Students' Attitude and Motivation Correlates with B23

No.	Items
B23	<i>I make a point of trying to understand all the English that I see and hear.</i>
B5	<i>It is ok if someone asks me something in English.</i>
B7	<i>It is really fine if I have to answer questions in English.</i>

Table 11 above showed that B23 correlated with B5 and B7 with 0.506 and 0.592. This meant that, when the students made a point of trying to understand all the English language they had seen and heard, they felt it was alright if someone asked them something in English, as well as if they had to answer questions in English. These items revealed that students' motivation and interest in learning language were influenced by what they saw and heard. According to Merita Ismaili (2013) movies had becoming an important tools in an EFL classroom. This was based on the fact that movies exposed

learners to the real language in an authentic setting. She also mentioned that the learners' interest had positively affect their motivation in learning.

Table 12: Students' Attitude and Motivation Correlates with B24

No.	Items
B24	<i>I keep up to date with English by working on it almost every day.</i>
B10	<i>I will try hard to understand the more complex aspect of English.</i>
B25	<i>I feel that speaking English is really great.</i>
B40	<i>I look forward to go to my English class because my English teacher is motivating.</i>
B50	<i>My English teacher is an interesting and creative person indeed.</i>

Table 12 above showed that B24 correlated with B10, B25, B40, and B50 with 0.578, 0.565, 0.558 and 0.528. This meant that, when the students kept up to date with English by working on it almost every day, they would try hard to understand the more complex aspect of the language, and felt that speaking English was really great. Also, they looked forward to go to their English class because their English teacher was motivating, as well as interesting and creative. All these items linked to self-motivation. According to Jeremy Harmer (2012), motivation was some kind of internal drive that pushed someone to do or think in order to achieve something. He emphasized that motivation was important in learning. Learners' motivation made teaching and learning easier as their interest would increase if they felt motivated, both from internal and external factor.

Table 13: Students' Attitude and Motivation Correlates with B25

No.	Items
B25	<i>I feel that speaking English is really great.</i>
B24	<i>I keep up to date with English by working on it almost every day.</i>
B46	<i>My English teacher allows us to use our mother tongue in the English class.</i>
B67	<i>My parents think I should spend more time to learn English.</i>

Table 13 above showed that B25 correlated with B24, B46, and B67 with 0.565, 0.535 and 0.548. This showed that, when the students felt that speaking English was really great, they kept up to date with English by working on it almost every day. Also, they felt that speaking English was really great because their English teacher allowed them to use their mother tongue during English class, and their parents thought they should spend more time to learn the language. All these items were related to metacognitive strategies. Anderson 2003 stated that metacognitive strategies played a vital role as a learning strategy. Once learner understood to regulate their learning strategies, learning process become faster. Learners would feel great in learning the language when they have knowledge about their own thinking and learning approaches, understand the task and were able to organize their strategies that best met their task demands and learning strength.

CONCLUSION

This study was carried out to examine attitude and motivation of the students in spoken English and which significant statements correlated with their attitude and motivation. As a result, it was found that positive attitude and motivation towards English language had encouraged students' determination in learning the language. Students with positive insight towards English language agreed that they had more constructive circumstances that could help their speaking skills.

The findings of this study replicated that attitude and motivation were essential variables towards English speaking. McGroarty (1996) had reported that "positive attitudes about language and language learning may be as much the result of success as the cause" (p.4). They could also become as indicators of what should be taken into account for language developers, curriculum designers, and decision makers especially within the education authorities in developing effective plans, course book or activities with optimum engagement from the students. A need of more varied communicative approaches such as exposure to native speakers in students exchange programs should be made as frequent activity. Moreover, teachers could collaborate with some parents to create a speaking environment outside the classroom using simple everyday instructions and conversation. Therefore, both teachers and parents could encourage students' determination to learn and improve their oral skills.

On the other hand, the findings of the study were limited only to the respondents in PSMZA so it might be invalid for extensive study. The research instrument used in this study was only a survey (questionnaire). It would be better if statistics could be collected using both survey and interview methods to ensure the information obtained from the quantitative data was aligned with the interview.

In conclusion, all ESL teachers need to stimulate their students' interest, encourage them to speak, and allow them to practice speaking without being judged. Generally, it is important to have positive attitude and motivation to cope with the progressive second language learning process. Thus, teachers should make efforts during the lesson to enhance positive feelings towards English language learning.

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