

## Attitudes and Motivation of Malaysian Secondary Students towards learning English as a Second Language: A Case Study

THANG SIEW MING  
TING SIEW LING  
NURJANAH MOHD JAAFAR

### ABSTRACT

*The English Language has always played a significant role in Malaysia's quest of becoming a developed nation. Despite this, the English proficiency level of Malaysian students is far from satisfactory. What are the reasons for this? Motivational studies have shown that Malaysian students realise the importance of English for their future development and that students are extrinsically motivated by factors such as the desire to get good grades, opportunities to further their studies and career advancement to improve their English. However, in these cases extrinsic motivation does not necessarily translate to better performance in English. Most of these studies were undertaken in tertiary settings. Thus, there is a possibility that secondary school students may not be aware of the importance of English for their future. Conversely, it is also probable that these problems stem from a lack of motivation and poor attitude beginning from secondary school. This paper discusses the findings of a study undertaken to investigate these issues further by carrying out a questionnaire survey on attitudes and motivation of a group of secondary school students in East Malaysia towards learning English as a Second Language. The study reveals an overall positive attitude towards learning English by Art and Science students. Further Science students and higher proficiency students show more interest in improving their English. In addition, the findings reveal a positive relationship between higher proficiency level and positive attitudes and motivation to learn English.*

*Keywords: attitudes; extrinsic motivation; intrinsic motivation; instrumental orientation; integrative orientation*

### INTRODUCTION

After Malaysia gained its independence in 1957, the English language has played the role of the nation's official language. The language became more significant when the Government came up with three concrete plans for the nation's future development. These plans are the development of Malaysia into an industrialised nation in line with vision 2020, the establishment of the multimedia super corridor (MSC) and the establishment of Malaysia as a regional centre of education. The plans have implications for a change in the language policy since Malaysia needs an English proficient population and needs to allow English to play a more dominant role (Awang Had Salleh, 1994; Asmah, 1997; Mansor, 1997).

English is placed as the second language in Malaysia (Gill, 2002) and in line with the education policy; English is taught as a second language. Studies have shown that Malaysian students realise the importance of English for their future endeavours (Ainol Madziah & Isarji, 2009; Chitravelu, Sithamparam & Teh, 1995; Samsiah, Kamaruzaman, Nurazila, Musdiana & Taniza, 2009; Thang, 2004) and that students are extrinsically motivated by factors such as desire to get good grades, opportunities to further their studies and career advancement to improve their English. However, these studies also revealed that extrinsic motivation does not necessarily translate to better performance in English.

Most of the abovementioned studies are undertaken in tertiary settings. There is a possibility that secondary school students may not be aware of the importance of English for their future. If that is the case, would they be extrinsically motivated to learn English? There is also the possibility that the problems identified in university students stem from a lack of motivation and poor attitude beginning from secondary school. The present study intends to investigate these issues further by carrying out a questionnaire survey on attitudes and motivation of a group of secondary school students in East Malaysia towards the learning of English to seek answers to the following research questions:

1. What are the form Five Art and Science students' attitudes towards the learning of English in general?
2. To what extent are these students influenced by intrinsic or extrinsic motivation in the learning of English?
3. What is the relationship between attitudes and motivation?
4. How are the attitudes and motivation of Art and Science students different?
5. What are the differences in attitudes and motivation among students of different proficiency levels?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### ATTITUDES AND MOTIVATION

Attitudes and motivation have a very clear link with the language learning process (Ellis, 1997; Gardner, 2001b). Gardner (1985) believes that students with positive attitudes and high level of motivation will be more successful compared to those with negative attitudes and no motivation. In addition, both motivation and positive attitude need to coexist together in order to achieve a successful language learning experience. For instance, a student who has favourable attitudes towards language learning but is not motivated to learn will not succeed as a language learner. Neither will a student who only has the motivation to learn but thinks ill of doing so (Gardner, 1979).

### ATTITUDE

Attitude is regarded as one of the key factors that contribute to L2 learning achievement (Spolsky, 1969). In addition, the extent to which students continue to actively participate in the language learning process is also determined by their attitudes. There are two types of attitude change towards language learning; positive and negative. Numerous research has indicated the advantages of having positive attitudes. Learners with positive attitudes towards L2 are more at an advantage compared to those with negative attitudes (Holmes, 1992; Littlewood, 1984; Spolsky, 1969; Norlida, 1997).

Students' attitudes positively correlate with their achievement in English. For instance, Holmes (1992) believes that when people feel positive towards target language users, they will be highly motivated and consequently more successful in acquiring the target language. In contrast, many views indicate the disadvantages of having negative attitudes towards L2 learning. Gardner and Lambert (1972) argue that students who have negative attitudes towards L2 learning are those who do not expend the effort of speaking to acquire L2 aspects, and they are also unfriendly and ethnocentric. The assumption that these students do not put in the effort to learn is also supported by Littlewood (1983). He further claims that they will lose interest towards learning since such attitudes produce an obstacle in the learning process and prevent them from obtaining new L2 knowledge.

Malaysian students' display poor effort in learning English even though its importance is generally acknowledged. This is reflected in Parilah's (2002) study that examined the views of key informants with regard to their ESL experiences. In this case study, the informants' attitudes, motivation and individual characteristics were examined. Even though the low achievers recognised the importance of English for instrumental purposes and regarded its use, standard and status positively, they did not really display positive attitudes towards learning the language. Little effort was spent inside and outside the classroom to improve their proficiency.

Motivated students have positive attitudes towards learning English. Racha (2003) conducted a study on four Sarawak secondary schools to examine students' readiness to learn Mathematics in English. Her findings indicated that majority of the students were highly motivated and had positive attitudes to learn the subject in English as they found that challenging. However, less proficient students were less comfortable and lack confidence in learning

Liu's (2007) study on Chinese university students' attitudes and motivation to learn English and the correlations of both variables with the students' English proficiency also revealed similar findings. The third-year undergraduates had positive attitudes and high level of motivation towards learning English. Liu suggested that this may be due to the rapid demand for university graduates to be highly proficient in English. In addition, correlation analysis showed that students who had more positive attitudes towards learning English tend to score higher in the proficiency test. However, Liu suggested that more positive attitudes and higher instrumental and travel orientations might also be the result of students' higher English proficiency.

#### MOTIVATION

Motivation is generally acknowledged as important in second language (L2) learning. It is classified into two types; intrinsic and extrinsic. Intrinsic motivation, commonly associated with integrative orientation, refers to the desire to perform an action without external inducement or reward (Bandura, 1977). Extrinsic motivation, which is usually associated with instrumental orientation, is a learner's desire for achievement to get an external reward (Pitmann & Boggiano, 1992). Gardner and Lambert (1959) believe that learners are either integratively or instrumentally oriented. The integratively oriented learners learn a L2 to interact with or become closer to L2 community, while the instrumentally oriented learners learn a L2 for practical goals (Gardner, 1985).

Studies in the Malaysian context suggest that Malaysian students are generally more extrinsically rather than intrinsically motivated (Ainol Madziah & Isarji, 2009; Parilah, 2002; Samsiah et al., 2009; Thang, 2004). Ainol Madziah and Isarji's (2009) investigation of foreign language learning in Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) and Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM) found extrinsic motivation to be the dominating factor among students. The majority of the students from both universities learn a foreign language for their future careers, to be more knowledgeable and to fulfill the graduation requirement. However, the findings revealed that UiTM students were slightly more intrinsically motivated to learn a foreign language than UKM students for interest, for enjoyment, to learn the literature of another culture and for travelling purposes.

Samsiah et al.'s (2009) study confirmed most of the findings of the above study. In their study they investigated the relationship between Universiti Teknologi Mara (UiTM) students' motivation, attitude and their English Language performance. The mean scores analysis of the motivation and performance revealed that the students were more extrinsically than intrinsically motivated to learn English. However, the relationship between extrinsic motivation, intrinsic motivation and performance was weak suggesting that extrinsic and

intrinsic motivations do not directly influence students' English language performance. Students' attitudes towards learning English in contrast, did affect their language performance. Samsiah et al.'s findings support earlier study by Saemah and Phillips (2006) which showed an indirect relationship between motivation and performance. Their study also revealed that students' metacognitive awareness is significantly related with motivation and academic achievement.

Malaysian students' tendency to be more instrumentally than integratively motivated to learn English is also evident in several other Asian communities. Liu's (2007) study conducted in mainland China for instance, revealed similar tendency among the students. She suggested that this may be due to students' minimum contact with English native speakers and their desire to have a brighter future. Some common instrumental orientations among these students were to get promoted, to get a good job, search information on the Web and be better educated. They were also highly motivated by travel. In addition, these students tend to perform better in the proficiency test. However, the majority of the students reported that they were more motivated when they first entered the university but they became less motivated to learn English because they had minimum contact with the language, heavy study load and no immediate pressure to learn the language.

#### THE SOCIO-EDUCATIONAL MODEL ON SECOND LANGUAGE ACQUISITION

To investigate these students' attitudes and motivation to learn English, Gardner's (1979) socio-educational model was chosen. In the model, Gardner distinguishes between four segments; Social Milieu, Individual Differences, Second Language Acquisition contexts and outcomes. Social milieu refers to an individual's environment that determines beliefs about other languages and cultures. Gardner introduces four individual differences that are most influential in second language acquisition. These variables; intelligence, language aptitude, motivation and situational anxiety are closely interrelated with the contexts and outcomes of second language acquisition, namely formal instruction within the classroom and unstructured language acquisition in a natural setting (Giles & Coupland, 1999). The language process is viewed as involving a particular causal interplay of these four segments. This will be the model adopted as the framework for this research study.

A very poignant feature of the context of this study is that the students are from a multicultural society studying English which is taught as a second language but not necessarily deemed so by them. This is in line with the central theme of the model which is acquisition of a second language in a particular cultural context. This model proposes that the belief in the community concerning the importance and meaningfulness of learning the language, the nature of skill development expected and the particular role of various individual differences in the language learning process will influence second language learning. For example, if the cultural belief is that it is difficult to learn, the general level of achievement will be low. Moreover, individual differences in achievement will be related to individual differences in intelligence, aptitude, motivation and anxiety. On the other hand, if an individual is keen to learn the language concerned, the general level of achievement would be high. Thus, it can be said that the cultural beliefs will influence not only the general level of proficiency in a second language that will be achieved in the community, but will also influence individual differences in achievement. It is not easy to come up with results on individual differences that are generalisable, unless a quantitative approach is used. Hence the study intends to measure differences in attitudes and motivation between the Arts and Science students and among students of different proficiency levels for a particular cultural background situated in a multicultural society through the use of a questionnaire.

Figure 1 provides an adapted version of socio-educational model (based on Gardner 2001a). It shows that two variables; integrativeness and attitudes towards the learning

situation, are correlated and influence motivation to learn a second language. Motivation and language aptitude on the other hand, influence language achievement.

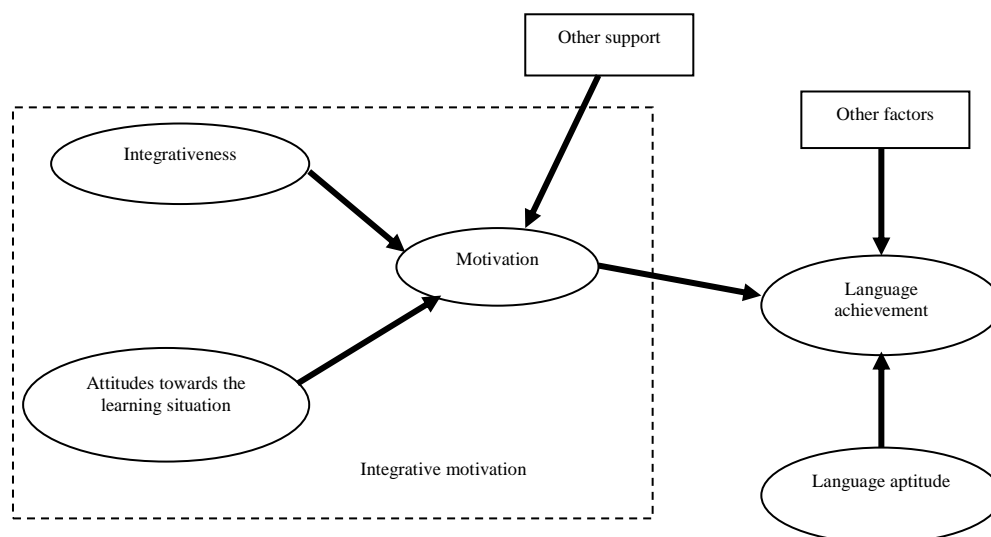


FIGURE 1. Basic model of the role of aptitude and motivation in second language learning

Integrativeness reflects a genuine interest in learning a second language in order to come closer to the other language community. At one level, this implies an openness to, and respect for other cultural groups and ways of life. Attitudes towards the learning situation involve attitudes towards any situation in which the language is learned. In the school context, these attitudes could be directed towards the teacher, the course in general, one's classmates and so forth. Moreover, motivation refers to the driving force in any situation.

In the socio-educational model, motivation to learn the second language comprises three elements. First, the motivated individual expends effort to learn the language. Second, the motivated individual wants to achieve the goal and third, the motivated individual will enjoy the task of learning the language. Effort, desire and positive affect distinguish individuals who are more motivated from those who are less motivated.

Figure 1 also shows that the three variables; integrativeness, attitudes towards the learning situation and motivation, form integrative motivation. As conceived in the socio-educational model of second language acquisition, integrative motivation is a complex blend of attitudinal, goal directed and motivational attributes. Hence, an integratively motivated individual is one who is motivated to learn the second language, has a desire or willingness to identify with the other language community, and tends to evaluate the learning situation positively.

In the model, integrativeness and attitudes towards the learning situation are seen as supports for motivation, but motivation is responsible for achievement in the second language. As such a learner may demonstrate high levels of integrativeness and / or positive attitudes towards the learning situation, but if these are not linked with motivation to learn the language, he will not be a good language achiever. Similarly, a learner who exhibits high level of motivation that is not supported by high levels of integrativeness and / or favourable attitudes towards the learning situation may not exhibit these high levels of motivation consistently.

Lambert's (1974) social psychological model identifies other supports for motivation that are not directly associated with integrative motivation. Thus, there may be instrumental factors contributing to motivation (Dornyei, 1994), and we could label this combination of

instrumental factors and motivation as Instrumental Motivation. Or, there may be other factors such as a particularly stimulating teacher or course that promotes motivation.

## METHODOLOGY

### RESEARCH DESIGN AND CONTEXT

This quantitative study employed a questionnaire survey to collect data. The procedure was carried out in a secondary boys' school in Sibul, Sarawak. This school was established in 1902 and used Bahasa Malaysia (BM) as its medium of instruction.

### SAMPLE POPULATION

143 male students, irrespective of their level of English proficiency participated in the survey. The population was made up of Chinese, Malay and Iban students from both Science and Art classes. The Chinese students made up 88.8% of the sample, followed by the Ibans, 10.5% and the Malays, 0.7%. To minimise undesirable variables, students who use Mandarin / Chinese dialect as their first language were selected. 111 questionnaires were distributed and collected.

The participants were those taking English as a compulsory subject in their Sijil Peperiksaan Malaysia (SPM) (Malaysian Certificate of Education). In order to gauge their level of proficiency, the Students' English Language results for the Penilaian Menengah Rendah (PMR) (Lower Secondary Assessment) were used. Students who obtained Grade A were categorised as High Proficiency (HP) students, Grade B as Average Proficiency (AP) students and Grades C, D and E as Low Proficiency (LP) students.

### RESEARCH TOOL

A survey questionnaire adapted from Gardner's Attitude and Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) (Gardner, 1985) was employed and translated into Bahasa Malaysia to investigate the students' attitudes and motivation. The questionnaire comprises 48 questions and has two sections. The first part, consisting of eight items, was designed to elicit students' background information, the result of their PMR English paper, their perceptions of their own levels of motivation and their reading habits.

The second section consists of 40 items designed to draw out information regarding the students' attitudes and motivation towards the learning of English. Likert scale items, ranging from 'strongly disagree' to 'strongly agree' were used to gauge responses. 20 items were aimed at extracting information pertaining to students' attitudes while another 20 measured their motivation in learning English. For motivation, there were 10 items regarding intrinsic motivation and another 10 on extrinsic motivation.

### RESEARCH PROCEDURES

The questionnaire was administered to two Science and two Art classes during English class period after the students were briefed on the purpose of the research. Students took about 15 minutes to complete the questionnaire.

Scores were tabulated using SPSS Windows 11.5. The statistical measures used to analyse data were ranking of mean scores, one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) and correlation coefficient. The purpose of ANOVA in this study was to compare the mean differences between the groups in terms of differences in disciplines and proficiency levels.

The p-value for significance was set at 0.05. For differences in English proficiency levels, Scheffe Tests were used to determine significance since more than two groups of subjects were involved. In addition, the correlation coefficient was used to determine the correlation between the two variables; attitudes and motivation.

## DATA ANALYSIS

The data were analysed using both descriptive and inferential tools. Ranking and correlation coefficient were the descriptive tools used and the inferential tool used was ANOVA.

### STUDENTS' BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The questionnaires were distributed to four classes of form five students, 61 (54%) Science students and 50 Arts students (48%). 35 students (31.5%) were HP students. 35 (31.5%) AP students and the remaining 41 (36.9%) were LP students.

### ATTITUDES AND MOTIVATION TOWARDS LEARNING ENGLISH

#### RANKING OF POSITIVE ATTITUDES

Table 1 displays the mean score ranking of 10 items for positive attitudes.

TABLE 1. Rank of mean score for positive attitudes

Rank	Items	Mean	Std. Deviation
1	English is an important part of the school programme	3.2883	.69265
2	I have desire to learn good English	3.0180	.78604
3	I plan to learn as much English as possible	3.0000	.73855
4	Learning English is very great	3.0000	.85280
5	I put a lot of effort in learning English	2.6216	.61871
6	I really enjoy learning English	2.6036	.80090
7	I find learning English is very interesting	2.5946	.82438
8	I enjoy my English class	2.4955	.85146
9	I would read English newspapers and magazines as often as I could	2.4685	.85088
10	When I have English exercises, I will finish it immediately	2.4234	.80396

Key:

Item 1 – awareness of importance of English

Items 2, 3, 5 – expression of desire to improve English

Items 4, 6, 7 – expression of interest in learning English

Items 8, 9, 10 – actual effort towards learning and improving English

Item 1 is about the awareness of the importance of English and the fact that this ranks highest shows that most students are aware of this. Subsequent items 2-7 show interest in learning English and expression of desire to learn English. Since these items generally rank higher than 2.5, it shows that there is a tendency towards this direction but when translated into action that may not necessarily be the case as indicated by the lower mean for items 8-10 that show actual interest and effort in learning and improving English in and out of the classroom. However, since the mean scores of the last three items are not that low; just slightly below 2.5 the situation is not that negative and probably can be rectified if the teachers make an effort to make their English classes more interesting.

#### RANKING OF NEGATIVE ATTITUDES

Table 2 shows the mean score ranking of 10 items for negative attitudes.

TABLE 2. Mean score ranking of negative attitudes towards learning English

Rank	Items	Mean	Std. Deviation
1	I prefer to read materials in other languages rather than English.	2.8018	.84013
2	It is hard to learn English.	2.7000	.85187
3	I feel stress in learning English.	2.4865	.82973
4	I find doing English exercises difficult.	2.4414	.84943
5	I force myself to listen to the teacher during English classes.	2.2883	.80213
6	During English classes, I become completely bored.	2.1759	.75910
7	I think that learning English is dull.	1.9820	.78604
8	When I leave school, I shall give up the study of English entirely because I am not interested in it.	1.9009	.85232
9	I never think of improving my English language.	1.7387	.79443
10	Learning English is a waste of time.	1.6091	.71799

Key:

Items 1-4 – Expression of difficulty in learning English

Items 5-7 – Perception of English as being uninteresting

Item 8-10 – Indication of no interest in learning or improving English

The mean scores for negative attitudes towards English are lower than positive attitudes and all of them are below the level of 3 (i.e. the agree level) which is a positive sign. The first four items that rank highest (with mean scores above or approaching 2.5) are items relating to the difficulty involved in learning English and it is clear that these students have problems learning English and prefer learning another language. Items 5 to 7 investigate whether students find learning English uninteresting and the low mean scores (of below 2.3) suggests that they do not really find learning English boring. Finally, the low mean scores for items 8 to 10 show that the students do not think that learning English is a waste of time and are still interested in improving their English when they leave school.

#### RANKING OF INTRINSIC MOTIVATION

Table 3 displays the mean score ranking of 10 items for intrinsic motivation.

TABLE 3. Mean score ranking of intrinsic motivation towards learning English

Rank	Items	Mean	Std. Deviation
1	Learning English is good for self-development.	3.2252	.69655
2	Learning English will allow me to converse with more and varied people.	3.2182	.78263
3	I learn English in order to improve my English language skills.	3.1982	.67177
4	Learning English will allow me to be more at ease with English speakers.	3.1712	.72455
5	Learning English will enable me to better understand and appreciate	2.8288	.78479
6	English literature.	2.6727	.87900
7	Learning English allows me to participate more freely in the activities of	2.6396	.82894
8	other cultural groups.	2.4865	.81870
9	I learn English because it is something that I always want to do.	2.4595	.86112
10	I study English because I enjoy learning it.	2.2703	.78562
	I feel more confident in learning English.		
	I make full use of my time to learn English.		

Key:

Items 1,3 – learning English to improve

Items 2,4-6 – learning English for social reasons

Items 7-8 – learning English to satisfy interest and enjoyment

Items 1 and 3 have mean scores of above 3 which suggest that students have interest to improve themselves for self-development, and to improve their language skills improvement. The mean scores of above 2.5 for items 2, 4, 5, 6 further reveal that students appear to be willing to learn English for social reasons and to understand the literature and cultures of other people. However, the mean scores for items 7 and 8 are around 2.5 which suggest less willingness to learn English for interest and enjoyment. Lack of confidence and



spending insufficient time on the learning English seem to be the major problems as these two items rank the lowest with mean scores below 2.5.

#### RANKING OF EXTRINSIC MOTIVATION

Table 4 shows the mean score ranking of 10 items for extrinsic motivation.

TABLE 4. Mean score ranking of extrinsic motivation towards learning English

Rank	Items	Mean	Std. Deviation
1	Learning English is important for my future career.	3.3784	.68827
2	Learning English is useful in getting a good job.	3.2703	.73788
3	I learn English because I need it to further my studies overseas.	3.2091	.80247
4	I study English because I want to do well in my examination.	3.1892	.69431
5	I need to learn English because it makes me a more knowledgeable person.	3.1182	.75092
6	I learn English because I can contribute more to the society.	2.7748	.83866
7	I need to learn English in order to finish high school.	2.7636	.91799
8	Learning English is important for me because other people will respect me more if I am good in English.	2.0180	.85261
9	I study English in order to please my family.	1.9459	.82943
10	I feel that no one is really educated unless he is fluent in English language.		

Key:

1-2 – learning English for future career

3, 4, 5, 7, – learning English for education

6, 8, 9, 10 – learning English due to external influences

The mean scores of above 3 for items 1 to 5 suggest students' strong desire to learn English for future career and educational purposes. However students seem less influenced by external factors such as desire to contribute to society and to please others as shown by the lower mean scores for items 6, 8, 9 and 10.

#### RELIABILITY ANALYSIS

Before comparing the group mean scores it is necessary to determine whether the grouping of items is reliable. The alpha reliability test was undertaken for that purpose. The Cronbach Alpha reliability value for positive attitudes is 0.85, for negative attitudes is 0.87, for intrinsic motivation is 0.83, and for extrinsic motivation is 0.7. Since all the Cronbach Alpha reliability values are above 0.7, this indicates that the grouping of all four groups of items is reliable.

#### OVERALL ATTITUDES TOWARDS LEARNING ENGLISH

The results of the students' attitudes towards the learning of English were divided into sub-categories. The mean scores of positive attitudes were divided into two sub-categories. Mean scores of 1.00-2.49 was classified as disagree and mean scores of 2.50-4.00 was classified as agree. The same categorisation procedure was followed for negative attitudes.

TABLE 5. Students' overall attitudes towards the learning of English

Subcategories for positive attitudes	Frequency	Percentage	Subcategories for negative attitudes	Frequency	Percentage
Disagree (mean 1.00-2.49)	32	28.8	Disagree (mean 1.00-2.49)	73	65.8
Agree (mean 2.50-4.00)	79	71.2	Agree (mean 2.50-4.00)	38	34.2
	111	100.0		111	100.0

As shown in Table 5, 71.2% of the students agreed that they have positive attitudes towards learning English and only 28.8% disagreed. This portrays favourable attitudes towards learning English. This is supported by the fact that 65.8% of the students disagreed that they have negative attitudes and only 34.2% admitted that they have negative attitudes towards the learning of English. Thus, it is evident that generally, the students have favourable attitudes towards learning English.

#### RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ATTITUDES AND MOTIVATION

To investigate the relationship between attitudes and motivation in learning English, Pearson correlation was carried out. The result is presented in Table 6.

TABLE 6. The result of correlation analysis performed on attitudes and motivation

		Positive attitude	Negative attitude	Intrinsic motivation	Extrinsic motivation
Positive attitude	Pearson Correlation	1	-.622(**)	.771(**)	.383(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000	.000	.000
	N	111	111	111	111
Negative attitude	Pearson Correlation	-.622(**)	1	-.530(**)	-.106
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.	.000	.267
	N	111	111	111	111
Intrinsic motivation	Pearson Correlation	.771(**)	-.530(**)	1	.512(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.	.000
	N	111	111	111	111
Mean for extrinsic motivation	Pearson Correlation	.383	-.106	.512(**)	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.267	.000	.
	N	111	111	111	111

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

As can be seen from Table 6, positive attitudes are negatively correlated with negative attitudes ( $r = -.622$ ). Intrinsic motivation is significantly correlated to positive attitudes ( $r = .771$ ) and extrinsic motivation ( $r = .512$ ) and negatively correlated to negative attitudes ( $r = -.530$ ). Extrinsic motivation, on the other hand, is not correlated to positive or negative attitudes. The findings suggest that students who are intrinsically motivated are likely to have more positive attitudes and less negative attitudes towards learning English when compared to extrinsically motivated respondents. In addition, these students are likely to be extrinsically motivated as well. This suggests that intrinsically motivated students may be more successful learners of English as positive attitudes can drive them to success.

#### COMPARING THE ATTITUDES AND MOTIVATION OF ART AND SCIENCE STUDENTS

Table 7 shows the differences in mean score of attitudes and motivation among Arts and Science students.

TABLE 7. The results of one way ANOVA performed on learning attitudes and motivation between Arts and Science students

	Type of Students	Mean	df	F	Sig
Positive attitude	Science	2.892	1	10.397	.002*
	Art	2.580			
Negative attitude	Science	2.0898	1	8.249	.005*
	Art	2.3662			

Intrinsic motivation	Science	2.9064	1	4.594	.034*
	Art	2.7076			
Extrinsic motivation	Science	2.8579	1	.883	.349
	Art	2.7807			

In the case of positive attitude, the mean score of Science students is significantly higher than Arts students. In the case of negative attitude, Arts students have a mean score higher than Science students. With regard to intrinsic motivation, the mean score of Science students is significantly higher. However, there is no significant difference for extrinsic motivation ( $p = .349$ ) between the students from both disciplines. The findings show that Science students are likely to have more positive attitudes towards learning English compared to Arts students. They also tend to be more intrinsically motivated to learn English. The findings however reveal that students' extrinsic motivation is not influenced by disciplines.

#### COMPARING THE ATTITUDES AND MOTIVATION OF STUDENTS OF DIFFERENT PROFICIENCY

Table 8 displays the differences in mean score of learning attitudes and motivation among students of different proficiency levels.

TABLE 8. The results of one way ANOVA performed on learning attitudes and motivation among proficiency

	Proficiency level of students	Mean	Std. Deviation	df	F	Sig.
Positive attitude	HP	2.937	.4772	2	11.794	.000
	AP	2.906	.4703			
	LP	2.461	.4979			
Negative attitude	HP	2.0013	.54980	2	12.097	.000
	AP	2.0924	.53913			
	LP	2.5003	.32484			
Extrinsic motivation	HP	2.8638	.41126	2	3.233	.043
	AP	2.9327	.41904			
	LP	2.6949	.43401			
Intrinsic motivation	HP	2.9454	.38987	2	10.070	.000
	AP	2.9857	.43463			
	LP	2.5629	.52548			

\* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

The findings reveal significance differences for all variables concerned. Specifically, Scheffe tests show that the mean score of the HP students is significantly higher than the LP student in the case of positive attitudes and the mean score of the AP students is significantly higher than that of the LP students in the case of negative attitudes which suggest that students of higher proficiency have more positive attitude towards learning English than low proficiency students.

Scheffe tests further show that the mean score of the AP students is significantly higher than that of the LP students for extrinsic motivation. A point to note is that the mean score between the HP and the AP groups is very close. As for intrinsic motivation, the mean score of the HP and AP groups are significantly higher than the LP group.

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The results indicate that generally, the Form five Art and Science students have positive attitudes towards the learning of English. They realise the importance of English in the school programme and they have the desire to learn English. Although they feel that learning English is difficult and stressful, they do not think it is a waste of time, and they even consider continuing to improve their English when they leave school. The findings further demonstrate that Science students have more positive attitudes towards learning English than Art students. With regard to proficiency, the better students have more positive attitudes and show greater initiatives towards learning English than the weak students. Thus, despite overall positive attitude towards learning English, it would appear that Science students and higher proficiency students are more interested in improving their English.

The students are also generally more extrinsically than intrinsically motivated to learn English to do well in their examinations and for future career. However, it seems that their extrinsic motivation is only limited to achieving personal career goals and does not extend to a desire to please family members, gain respect from others nor contribute to the society. This is not very encouraging as students' reasons for improving themselves are driven by self-interest. This is supported by the lesser interest shown to improve English for intrinsic reasons though some did seem to be interested to improve themselves for intrinsic reasons such as self-development, communication purposes and integration into the L2 community. The students further showed a lack confidence and enthusiasm towards learning English as they found learning English to be not enjoyable.

The findings generally support findings in other Malaysian contexts which revealed that higher proficiency students and Science students have more positive attitudes towards learning English and are more intrinsically motivated too (Racha, 2003; Ainol Madziah & Isarji, 2009; Samsiah et al., 2009; Thang, 2004). The fact that Science students are generally students who perform better in the studies seem to further confirm the positive relationship between higher proficiency level and positive attitudes and motivation towards the learning of English. Thus, it would appear that Malaysian secondary schools students are not very different from Malaysian students in tertiary institutions in terms of their attitudes and motivation towards the learning of English.

The problem of students being more extrinsically motivated than intrinsically motivated is something that cannot be easily resolved as other studies in Malaysian have revealed that this is a common phenomenon among Malaysian students (Ainol Madziah & Isarji, 2009; Samsiah et al., 2009; Thang, 2004). Other studies on characteristics of Malaysian students further revealed a tendency towards passivity, teacher centredness and a general lack of autonomy (Koo, 2003; Thang, 2009a & b; Thang & Azarina 2007; Umadevi; 2001). This suggests the possibility of a relationship between an inclination towards the abovementioned tendencies and extrinsic motivation. The fact that most of these studies revealed that learners of higher proficiency seem to be less inclined to these tendencies further support this conclusion. Further studies need to be undertaken to confirm this but it would reasonable to propose that the problem of a lack of intrinsic motivation can be reduced by helping the students to take greater responsibility for their own learning as self-drive is a key feature of an intrinsically-motivated learner as well as an autonomous learner. Thus, Malaysian teachers should undertake measures to move their students to a more autonomous mindset by providing them with the necessary strategies and training (such as those proposed by Nambiar, 2009; Philip & Koo, 2006; Siddhu, 2009). In addition, the findings of the present study indicate a need for Malaysian teachers to pay more attention to students with lower proficiency to break the vicious cycle. This includes providing them with a conducive and stress-free environment and interactive and creative activities to learn English. Activities in

the classroom should capture students' interest and cater for students' different needs so that they can be continuously interested and engaged in learning.

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Thang Siew Ming  
Ting Siew Ling  
Nurjanah Mohd Jaafar  
Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia  
thang@ukm.my