SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS' MOTIVATION AND ATTITUDE TOWARDS ENGLISH

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STUDENTS' MOTIVATION AND ATTITUDE TOWARDS ENGLISH

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To my beloved parent and teachers

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ABSTRACT

This research intends to identify the level of secondary school students' motivation and attitude towards English. The study involved six schools from three different areas which are urban, suburban and rural areas. A total of 240 students were selected to be the respondents for this study. However, only 192 respondents gave their full commitment in this study. The data was gathered using questionnaires consisting of 3 parts namely Part A (Demography), Part B (Motivation towards English) and Part C (Attitudes towards English). The collected data was then analyzed thoroughly by means of descriptive statistics (mean and percentage) and inferential statistics (ANOVA and Pearson Correlation). Generally, the findings show high level of motivation towards English but medium level of attitudes towards English. The findings also unearthed that students from different school areas have different level of motivation and attitude towards English. The findings also made it clear that there is a difference in students' level of motivation and attitude towards English based on ethnicities. In addition, this study finds that there is a strong relationship between students' motivation and attitude towards English. In this study, several suggestions have been made based on the findings and to ease future researchers.

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini bertujuan untuk mengenalpasti tahap motivasi dan tingkah laku pelajar terhadap Bahasa Inggeris. Kajian ini melibatkan enam sekolah dari tiga kawasan sekolah yang berlainan iaitu bandar, pinggir bandar dan pedalaman. Seramai 240 orang guru telah dipilih untuk menjadi responden bagi kajian ini. Walaubagaimanapun, hanya 192 responden yang memberikan komitmen yang sepenuhnya dalam kajian ini. Data-data yang dikumpul dengan menggunakan borang soal selidik terdiri daripada tiga bahagian iaitu bahagian A (Demografi), bahagian B (Motivasi terhadap Bahasa Inggeris) dan bahagian C (Tingkah laku terhadap Bahasa Inggeris). Data yang dikumpul kemudian telah dianalisis dengan menggunakan statistik deskriptif (min dan peratus) dan statistik inferensi (ANOVA dan korelasi-Pearson). Hasil dapatan kajian menjelaskan secara keseluruhannya, tahap motivasi pelajar terhadap Bahasa Inggeris berada pada tahap yang tinggi manakala tahap tingkah laku pelajar terhadap Bahasa Inggeris berada di tahap yang sederhana. Dapatan kajian turut menerangkan terdapat perbezaan dari segi tahap motivasi dan tingkah laku terhadap Bahasa Inggeris di kalangan pelajar sekolah menengah dari kawasan yang berlainan. Dapatan kajian juga menjelaskan bahawa terdapat perbezaan dari segi tahap motivasi dan tingkah laku di kalangan pelajar sekolah menengah dari kaum yang berlainan. Selain daripada itu, hasil kajian ini mendapati bahawa terdapat hubungan yang kuat antara motivasi dan tingkah laku pelajar terhadap Bahasa Inggeris. Dalam kajian ini, beberapa cadangan juga telah dikemukakan berdasarkan dapatan kajian dan untuk kajian yang akan datang.

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INTRODUCTION

1.1   Introduction to the Study

For centuries, language has been proven as a powerful tool for the mean of communication for human. The history behind human's great success in civilization lies greatly under the practice of language. Trading for example, which was one of human's major source of income during the civilization era, showed the importance of language with respect to economic development without neglecting a mutual need. The Malay language which was then the *lingua franca* for traders at Malacca was practiced widely by every merchant who came there during the trade. They perceived Malay language as a necessity for them to communicate effectively in terms of trade. This scenario and many others showed how significant language is in our life. The utilization of this life's essential element does not only cover the economic development aspect, but also in enhancing personal relationship, securing job employment, conveying political views, enforcement of laws, and providing a quality education.

Bahasa Malaysia or the Malay language is widely practiced in Malaysia as the national language. This multi- cultural country consists of Malay which makes up 50.4 percent of it, followed by Chinese with 23.7 percent, Indian with 7.1 percent and other Bumiputras or the native tribes with 11 percent (Department of Statistics, Malaysia, 2010). Although Bahasa Malaysia is the national language, there is no

clear consensus on the first language of its citizens. Definitely, it is the first language to the majority of Malays. Chinese dialects like Mandarin, Cantonese, Hokkien, Hakka, and Hainanese are also considered as the first language to Chinese. Tamil on the other hand, is the first language for most Indians. The native tribes in the East Malaysia like the Iban, Kadazan and Melanau have their own mother tongue which is closely related in its syntax and phonology to Bahasa Malaysia. Nonetheless, despite the diversity in its multi-cultural and racial background, the well agreed and officially declared second most important language in Malaysia is the English language.

Nowadays, the application of English throughout Malaysia needs no further elaboration. As the globalization wave gets tougher, many Malaysian adapted English in their daily conversation both formally and informally. To some, English is no longer the second language in their household. Many private and multinational corporations also have been communicating in English in their formal business. One of the major domains that stressed the importance of mastering English is education.

The government has gone through an extra mile in creating awareness of the importance of English in education, even from the kindergarten and primary school level. In January 2003, English was introduced as medium for the teaching of Science and Mathematics under the PPSMI policy, which stands for *Pengajaran dan Pembelajaran Sains dan Matematik dalam Bahasa Inggeris* (The Teaching and Learning of Science and Mathematics in English). Since then, both of the subjects are taught and being examined in mixed medium of Bahasa Malaysia and English.

However, currently the policy is pending reversal to Bahasa Malaysia in 2012 due to its heavy critics of its accomplishment. Nonetheless, the government's effort upholds its progressive trait in ensuring the mastery of English among Malaysians, specifically the students. With the abolishment of PPSMI, another policy under the name MBMMBI was introduced. The new policy which will take effect in 2012, balances the importance of both Bahasa Malaysia and English language. Named as *Memartabatkan Bahasa Malaysia & Memperkukuh Bahasa Inggeris* (To Uphold

Bahasa Malaysia & to Strengthen the English Language) this policy will introduce an additional 90 minutes in total of a week teaching time for both national and national –type schools. Apart from that, quality English language teachers, primary and secondary school English curriculum transformation, entertainment in learning and Science and Mathematics elements in English are among the focus on its implementation soon. (Ministry of Education of Malaysia, 2010).

Although some controversies were unavoidable in the early stage of promoting bilingualism in Malaysia, research indicates that additive bilingualism, the addition of second language that builds on an already well- developed first language, enhances thinking ability (Cummins, 1989). As in the scenario in Malaysia, English is the additive bilingualism. When additive bilingualism is embraced in the classroom, students' cognitive abilities, self- esteem, and motivation to learn become enhanced (Garcia, 1992) All these research results best explains the reason behind the government's prioritize manner in the teaching of English as the second language. The aim does not only focus on nurturing fluent English speaker. This long termed-goal-effort also does not neglect education's main purpose that is as a tool for the development of an individual, or psychologically defined, human development.

1.2   Background of the Problem

As noted earlier, the implementation of bilingualism or second language acquisition can bring about many benefits. However, to accomplish the goal is no easy task.

In Malaysian context, English stands as a second language is schools. This scenario proves that English is an essential language which is needed to be learnt not only for the purpose of getting a high score in examination, but also to be used in daily conversations and in some formal exchanges. In other words, the intention of implementing English as a second language in schools is not only to improve intellectual development, but also to enhance thinking and communication skills.

This suggests that the acquisition of English could contribute to the knowledge, understanding and skills of students, who need to be equipped with such skills in order to be prepared for more complex problems in the future (Rosli Talif, 1995)

As English is perceived as an important language, it becomes a compulsory paper in all public examinations. Starting with UPSR (*Ujian Pencapaian Sekolah Rendah*) in the primary level, it continues with PMR (*Penilaian Menengah Rendah*) in form three and SPM (*Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia*) in the final year of secondary school level. As optional, some students choose to further it to the STPM (*Sijil Tinggi Pelajaran Malaysia*) in form six. The public examinations have been used as a tool of students' level of achievement in every subject every year. As for English paper in SPM, it is the equivalence of the GCE "O" Level examination, which involves the Cambridge Examination Board in its accreditation and designing of the questions. This step taken is equivalent with the Ministry of Education's goal to produce students with English proficiency of national and international standard. With the involvement of the internationally-recognized Cambridge Examination Board, students will obtain two grades in their SPM English result, which consist of Malaysian level (SPM English) and the GCE "O" level English. The latter, which aims to recognize students' high level of English proficiency internationally, is used as a reference for entry requirement into British universities. The SPM examination indicates the end of secondary school education for students. It is taken at the end of form five. Taking into account the total of six years in primary and five in secondary education, it shows that students have been exposed to English language for at least eleven years. Yet, the English result in SPM is still at alarming rate.

From the linguist perspective, the total of years of exposure to English should be sufficient for the students to at least achieve the average speaker level in terms of the fluency. Nonetheless, based on the SPM 2009 English overall achievement, the percentage of candidates who pass the paper is just 64.9 percent. In an article entitled *"Better SPM results this time around"* from the Malay Mail online (dated March 11th 2010), in 2009, a total of 465, 853 students sat for the SPM, with 302, 501 candidates pass the subject. That left another 163,352 students or 35.1 percent of candidates who failed the paper. Although the percentage of candidates who pass is higher, the

total of those who fail is still considered a huge number compared to the total of all candidates.

Judging from the SPM result in English subject, the level of proficiency among Malaysian secondary school students is still beyond satisfactory. This problem should be tackled immediately to ensure that Malaysian students will not be left behind in this globalization era. The demand for mastery in English has increased rapidly as the effect of globalization which recognizes English as an important tool. This modern-day lingua franca is not only applied in education, but also politics, law, media and job employment. News that many undergraduates could not secure a job due to inefficiency in English is no longer something new in our shores. Despite having a diploma or even a bachelor's degree, undergraduates found difficulty in getting employed because some cannot even apply basic English conversation during a job interview. Considering the level of proficiency in English among Malaysian students is at stake, a call to examine the problem at the earlier stage seems necessary.

Previous researches have proven that the level of students' motivation can bring about a direct influence on their attitude towards learning a second language. As the students' level of proficiency in English is at an alarming rate, it is a necessity for school teachers and the community to start looking at the level of students' motivation and attitudes towards English.

1.3   Statement of the Problem

Among the known problem in class is lack of participation from students. Specifically in public speaking session during English class, it is common to hear students' excuse to avoid from taking part because of lack of confidence. In addition, some students reluctantly ask questions and answer in English even being asked in the same language. Apart from that, they even showed disagreeable to respond in English during oral test. Shockingly, this happens not only in the beginner classes.

Even for intermediate to advanced students who scored B to A in the subject, the problem seems to have no exception on them. In other words, some can do quite good on paper, but just below average in the real life application. Factors that influence students' involvement need to be identified so that they are not learning English just for the mean of getting a good grade in the subject, in which eventually results in inefficient English speaker who will find problem in getting employed. Thus, it seems necessary to carry out an investigation to identify whether the students are instrumentally motivated, integratively motivated or both.

While some students found English important, others feel like it is just another subject to take at school or university. Lacking in awareness of the importance of English is matter that should be paid great attention to it. This factor can be considered as the 'root' of all the motivations and attitudes in learning it. It is undeniable that most students feel that to have a firm grasp in English is something difficult. This could be due to the fact that English is hugely different from Bahasa Malaysia, Mandarin or Tamil. As a result, it could demotivate them to pick up the language. Worse comes to worst, should students have a perception that it is unimportant to master English, it will results in negative motivations towards it and thus, affect the attitude as well. The students might show lack of interest in class activities, opted to be a passive learner or might not even bother to complete any given task. Thus, there is a crucial need for students' level of motivation towards English to be investigated

The main purpose of learning the subject is to produce efficient speakers with good command of English. Focusing on the skills, they can do well in writing and reading, but still weak in speaking. This condition is closely related to the effect of feedback from others, with regard to self-concept. Early investigation reveals that students are afraid of making mistakes because of the effect of evaluation apprehension. It is assumed that the evaluation apprehension is among the major factors that obstruct Malaysian students' effort to even try to speak in English. They afraid that they will be judged as incompetent English speaker or being laughed at when mispronouncing some words, unsuitably using pragmatics or constructing grammatically wrong sentences. For example, in a brainstorming session, students

will be afraid to share their experience on the past holiday if they are not sure whether or not they use the correct tense while constructing the sentence. To avoid being laughed at when unsurely using the past tense of 'go' as 'goed', they resort to being passive in class. Therefore, this study will reveal more on the students' attitude towards English.

In second language learning, effective learning can take place if the students are equipped with high motivation and positive attitude towards the target language. This is because many linguists have proven that motivation and attitude are closely related in determining the success of second language learning (Gardner and Lambert, 1972). Second language learning will be more effective with higher levels of motivation and positive attitude and vice versa. Brown (2000) states that positive attitudes towards the self, the native language and the target language group enhance second language proficiency. He also states that a second language learner benefits from positive attitude and that negative attitude may lead to decrease in motivation, input and interaction, hence, lead to unsuccessful attainment of proficiency.

Among the challenges in ensuring proficiency among school students is English language is only applied in English subject itself, and Mathematics and Science, which is awaiting abolishment in 2012. Depending on the area of the school, secondary school students still found it difficult to familiarize themselves with the language. For rural areas or suburban, English may be exposed primarily at school during English subject only. The surrounding environment does not really promote the learning of the language. The possibility is high that it is majorly populated with native language speakers, whereby English is not the chosen language for practice at home or daily conversation. However, the scenario is totally different in an urban setting. In big cities like Kuala Lumpur, Penang and Johor Baharu, English is not merely a subject at school. It is widely accepted as the conversational language in many households. In fact, it is even the main language to some. Parents who consist of professionals or at least working in an English speaking environment also provide the platform for the students to practice English at home.

In addition, the vast coverage of media and entertainment in English that one can see at shopping malls, restaurants and education centres make the students in urban area enjoy an abundance of exposure. Nonetheless, despite the wide exposure of it, examination results still shows no definite sign that urban school students can master English easily. Thus, this study will take a close look on the degree of effects that the setting of school area can bring to students' motivation and attitudes throughout the learning process of English.

1.4   Objectives of Study

In order to tackle the issue of inefficiency in English among Malaysian secondary school students, it is important to predict the students' tendency in learning, the acquisition process and the application of it in and out of the classroom. Thus, this study will set its focus on identifying the secondary school students' motivation and attitudes towards English and the differences in the levels in three different school areas namely urban, suburban and rural. Apart from that, this study will also investigate to investigate students' motivation and attitude towards English and the differences in the levels among Malay, Chinese and Indian students. In addition, it will also focus on the relationship between students' motivation and attitude. These steps seem necessary because in order to solve the problem, one does not only need to identify it, but more importantly its 'sources'. The objectives can be summed up as follows:

i) To identify the levels of secondary school students' motivation towards English in three different school areas (urban, suburban and rural)

ii) To identify the levels of secondary school students' attitude towards English in three different school areas (urban, suburban and rural)

iii) To identify the difference in levels of secondary school students' motivation and attitude towards English in three different school areas (urban, suburban and rural)

iv) To identify the difference in levels of secondary school students' motivation and attitude towards English among three different ethnicities (Malay, Chinese and Indian)

v) To identify the relationship between secondary school students' motivation and attitudes towards English.

1.5   Research Questions

To meet the objectives, this study will be carried out based on the following questions:

i)   What is the level of secondary school students' motivation towards English language in urban, suburban and rural school?

ii) What is the level of secondary school students' attitudes towards English language in urban, suburban and rural school?

iii) Is there any difference in the levels of secondary school students' motivation and attitude towards English language among three different school areas (urban, suburban and rural)?

iv) Is there any difference in the levels of secondary school students' motivation and attitude towards English language among three different ethnicities (Malay, Chinese and Indian)?

v) Is there any significant relationship between secondary school students' motivation and students' attitudes towards English?

1.6   Research Hypotheses

Based on the research questions, the following hypotheses are constructed:

i)   Null Hypothesis 1 for Research Question (iii):

$H_0$1 There is no difference in the levels of motivation of secondary school students towards English among three different school areas (urban, suburban and rural)

ii)   Null Hypothesis 2 for Research Question (iii):

$H_0$2 There is no difference in the levels attitude of secondary school students towards English among three different school areas (urban, suburban and rural)

iii)   Null Hypothesis 3 for Research Question (iv):

$H_0$3 There is no difference in the levels of motivation of secondary school students towards English among three different ethnicities (Malay, Chinese and Indian)

iv)   Null Hypothesis 4 for Research Question (iv):

$H_0$4 There is no difference in the levels of attitude of secondary school students towards English among three different ethnicities (Malay, Chinese and Indian)

v)   Null Hypothesis 5 for Research Question (v):

$H_0$5 There is no significant relationship between secondary school students' motivation and attitude towards English.

1.7   Significance of the Study

This study will reveal a crucial matter that we cannot overlook in English language learning, which are the motivation and attitude towards it. On a greater scope, to improve the command of English among the students is something that we cannot take lightly. To ensure that can be achieved, the motivations and attitudes need not only to be identified, but to be changed as well. For Malaysian students, inefficiency in English is not only related to the linguistic domain such as vocabulary, sentence structures and phonology. For example if a student cannot properly construct a sentence, the problem can be overcame with willingness to try. In Malaysian students' situation, it is also related to the affective aspect. Negative motivations and attitudes towards English should be eliminated to help students master the language easier. This study is highlighted on the motivations and attitudes towards English language as it is believed to be among the major factors that influence the learning process.

As the saying goes 'prevention is better than cure', it is important for educationist not only to solve the problem, but avoiding it from happening. It is hoped that findings from this study can shape the proper motivations and attitudes among students that can positively promote the learning process. The results should also provide a reference for educationists on what should be avoided and encouraged in order to construct positive motivations and attitudes towards English language. For instance, if it is confirmed that the cause of students' passivity in class is due to the fear of evaluation apprehension, teachers can coat the effect of it by explaining that making mistakes is always acceptable in learning a new language. As for the students, the study would change their negative motivations and attitudes, which will bring about a great difference in their learning process in and out of classroom.

Exposure wise, parents and the community can have a clearer picture of their role in the process of acquisition and practice of the language. This study will increase awareness on their role and what actions should be taken to promote positive English language learning environment. Findings from the study can provide

insights into the influence on their involvement in the students' learning process. As one of the influential people among the students, parents should realize how influential they can get in terms of exposure towards English language. This study also aims to examine the relationship between exposure and motivations and attitudes. Thus, with the aid of the findings, parents and the community should be able to set an environment that is conducive that can provide lots of language input for the students to acquire the language in a more effective manner.

1.8   Theoretical Framework

Motivation and attitude are closely related that a change in motivation can bring about a change in attitude as well. Motivation is the process by which organisms interpret and organize sensation to produce meaningful experience of the world (Lindsay & Norman, 1977). As for attitude, it is defined as a mind-set or a tendency to act in particular way due to both an individual's experience and temperament (Allport, 1935). In other words, motivation will firstly produce experience based on selected stimuli. Then, the experience that was formed from motivation will influence the mind-set and thus, the attitude.

This study is conducted to take a close look at students' motivation and attitude towards English language and the difference in its level among different school areas and ethnicities in Malaysia. In the beginning stage of this study, it is hypothesised that students from different school areas and ethnicity has different motivation and attitude towards English. Thus, the researcher had related Krashen's affective filter hypothesis (1982) to support this hypothesis. This hypothesis consists of integrative and instrumental motivation component which are crucial to determine the outcome of this study.

Krashen's affective filter hypothesis serves as the basis of study to identify the level of students' motivation and attitude towards English. It is also aimed to investigate the motivation factors among students from different ethnicities and

different school areas. The two main motivation components, integrative and isntrumental are hypothesised as the factors that influence motivation. Different motivation directly sets different way of how the learners perceive English and will eventually affect their attitude towards English as well.

Another important theory that underpins this study is the evaluation apprehension model which was introduced by Cottrell (1972). Since using second language for communication is defined as a complex task, it deals closely with other's evaluation of how we perform the task. Students may feel highly aroused because of having fear of others are observing and ridiculing them. As a result, it can lead to incompetency. Some students who have problem coping with other's evaluation can be negatively affected in the task, thus affecting their attitude towards English language.

Evaluation apprehension will be used as a tool to investigate whether or not students from different area and ethnicity have different levels of attitudes. Evaluation apprehension may imply different effect on students from different area and ethnicity. It is closely related to social facilitation whereby the presence of others and the heightened concern of evaluation may impair the students' competency on English, particularly different ethnicity which have different mind-set. With different evaluation and expectation, different motivation will be generated and thus lead to different attitude towards English. This study will set its focus on identifying the students' attitudes towards the speakers of English and English language learning.

The theories which will be discussed in the next chapter are related to the formation of secondary school students' motivation and attitude towards English. It is hoped that by highlighting the interrelation between the theories in this theoretical framework, the researcher has provided the key to understanding its underlying process.Theoretical framework of this study is shown in Figure 1.1.
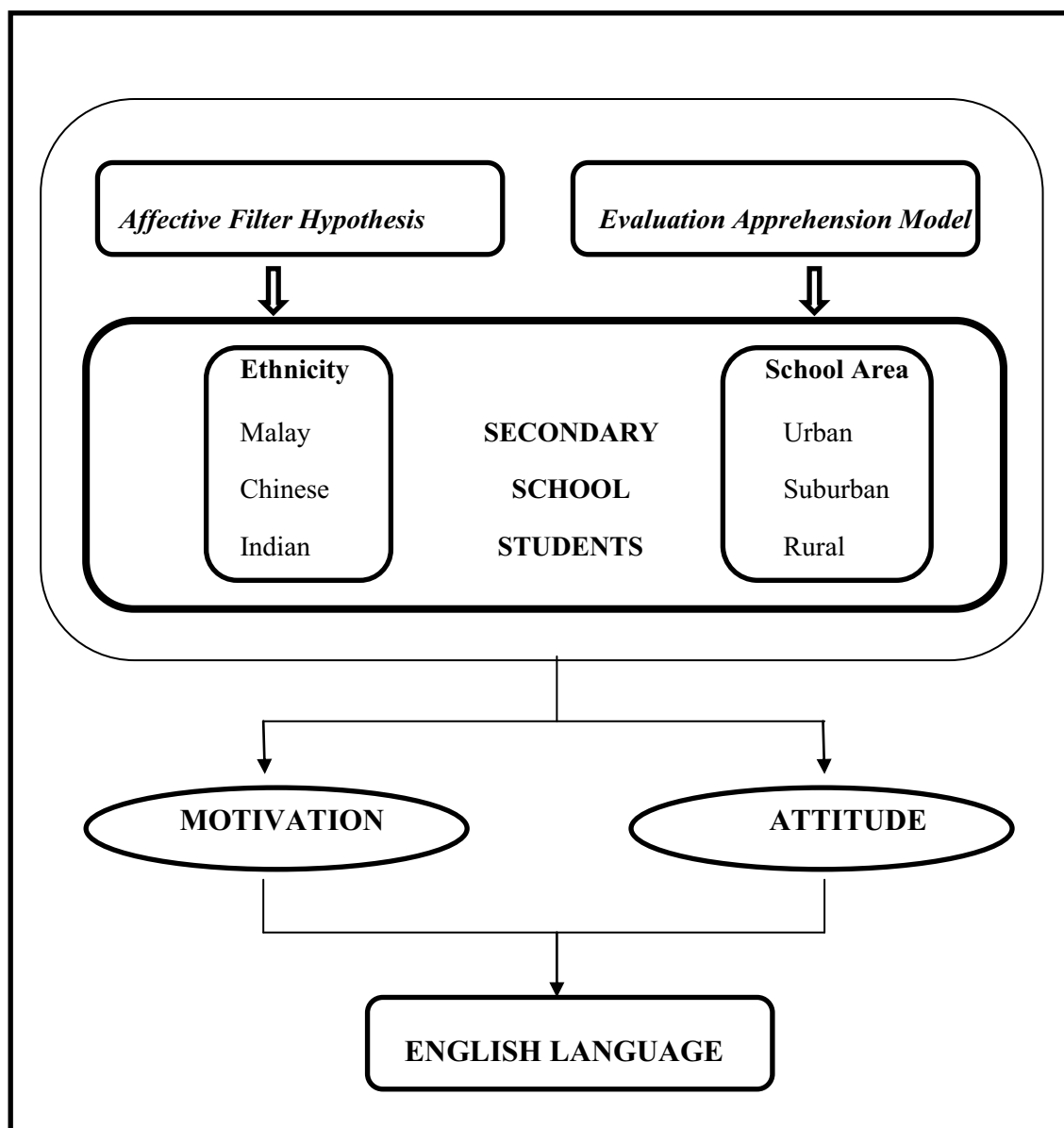
Figure 1.1: Theoretical Framework

1.9 Conceptual Framework

Conceptual framework for this study is developed based on the theoretical framework of this study. The conceptual framework for this study is shown in Figure 1.2. It shows the ethnicity of the students, which consists of Malay, Chinese and Indian, with different levels of motivation and attitude. It is hypothesised that students from different ethnicity have different motivation and attitude towards English.

Another highlight in the conceptual framework is the school areas of the students, which consists of urban, suburban and rural area, and their levels of motivation and attitude towards English. It is hypothesised that students from different school area have different motivation and attitude towards English. Conceptual framework in this study is shown in Figure 1.2.
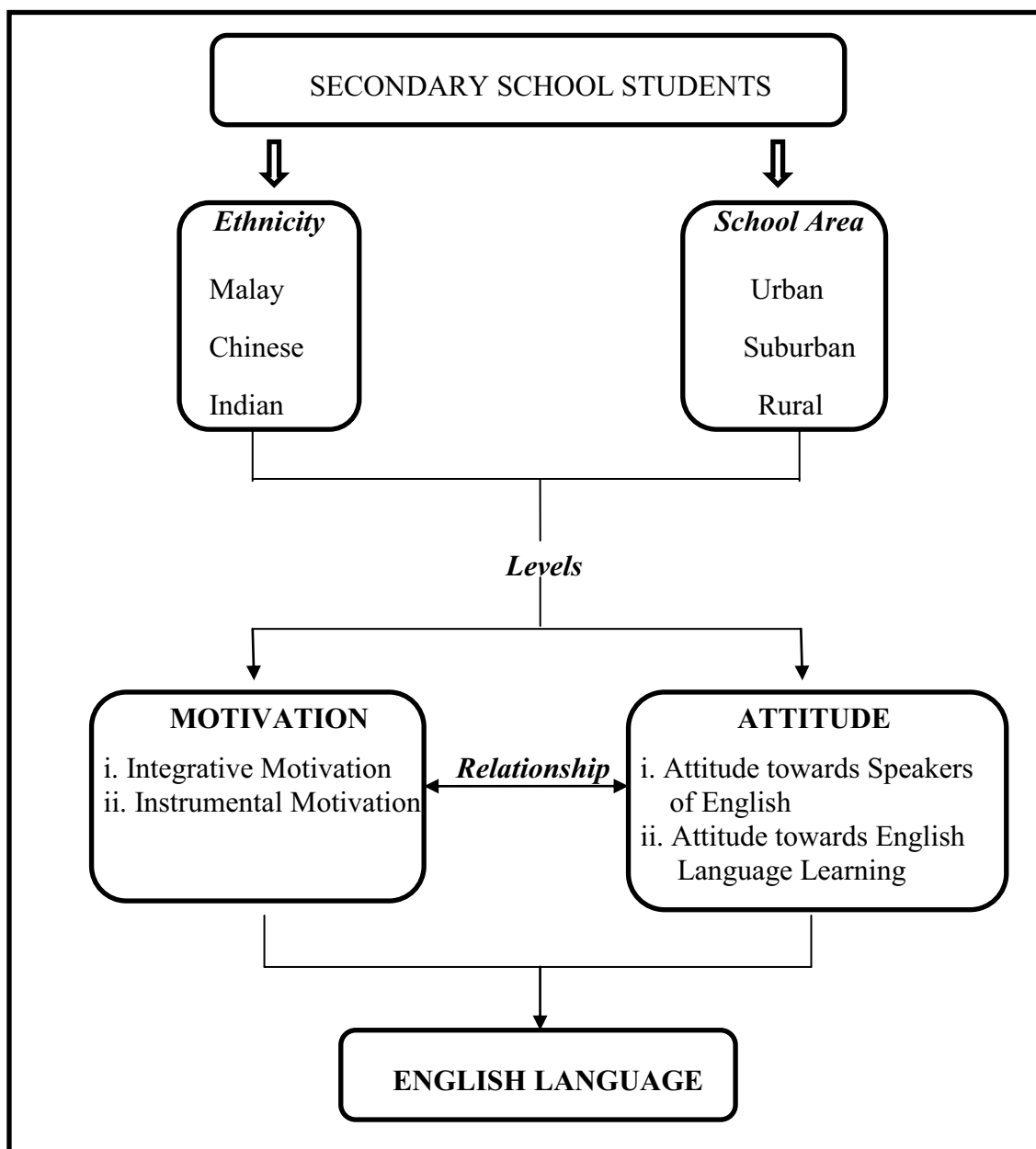
Figure 1.2: Conceptual Framework

1.10   Scope of Study

The scope of study includes:

i)   The participants consist of 240 form four students in secondary school from six different schools

ii)   The participants are selected form six different schools in Johor from three different area densities. The schools include:
   a) Urban area – SM IJ Convent and SMK Sultan Ismail, Johor Bahru
   b) Suburban area – SMK Taman Selesa Jaya and SMK Sri Perling, Skudai
   c) Rural area – SMK Seri Aman and SMK Tan Sri Jaafar Albar, Kota Tinggi

iii)   For each school, 40 students were selected from different ethnicities

1.11   Limitations of Study

Several limitations of the study are listed as follows:

i)   Sample of this study is restricted to randomly sampling of schools from certain urban, suburban and rural areas in Johor. Therefore, the findings of this study may not be generalized to other states in Malaysia.

ii)   Sample of this study are selected from form four students in secondary schools only. Therefore, the findings of this study may not be generalized to students from primary school.

iii)   Sample of this study consist of students from three major ethnicities in Malaysia only which are Malay, Chinese and Indian. Therefore, the findings of this study may not be generalized to students from different ethnicities in Malaysia especially from Sabah and Sarawak.

iv)   The findings of this study rely greatly on the honesty and the concern of the participants in answering the questionnaire and achieving the objectives of this study.

1.12   Conceptual and Operational Definitions

Definitions are provided for important research variables. Conceptual and operational definitions are given below for all the study variables and most related key terms.

1.12.1 Motivation

Motivation is the process of generating a concept or understanding of the environment by organising and interpreting stimuli. It is also described as the process of constructing mental representations of distal stimuli using the information from proximal stimuli. Motivation depends largely on the complex functions of the nervous system, but on the contrary it seems uncomplicated as this process mostly occurs beyond the human consciousness.

In this study, motivation refers to the result of incoming various stimuli that include motivation, social facilitation and exposure. These stimuli that have major influence on the formation of motivation will then influence the formation of attitude and English language learning.

1.12.2 Attitude

Lumley (1928) defined attitude as susceptibility to certain kinds of stimuli and readiness to respond repeatedly in a given way- which are possible towards our world and the parts of it which impinge on us. The affective response is an expressive response that states an individual's level of preference for an object. Most

attitudes are the product of either direct experience or observational learning from the surrounding.

In this study, attitude is the product of motivation that determines the preferred style or approach of students to learn English language. Some may display a high level of positive attitude while some may possess a high level of negative attitude towards learning English.

1.12.3 English Language

English as a second language (ESL), English for speakers of other languages (ESOL), and English as a foreign language (EFL) all refer to the use or study of English by speakers with different native languages. In Malaysia, English is labelled as the second language after the Malay Language (*Bahasa Malaysia*).

This study focuses on the learning of English which includes the positive attitude as attitude towards speakers of English and English language learning. As for the negative attitude in learning English, this study will take into consideration the inability to perceive English as important as the Malay language and not confident to speak even simple English sentences.

1.12.4 Secondary School Students

Public secondary education in Malaysia is provided by National Secondary Schools (*Sekolah Menengah Kebangsaan, SMK*). National Secondary Schools use Malay as the main medium of instruction while English is a compulsory subject in all schools.

Secondary school students comprise of students who had completed primary education. Most students entered Form 1 when they are 13. For students from national-type primary schools who fail to obtain at least C in Malay subjects in UPSR, they will attend a year- long transition class called Remove (*Tingkatan/ Kelas Peralihan*). Thus, they start Form 1 education when they are 14 years old. Secondary education lasts for five years, referred to as Form (*Tingkatan*) 1 to 5. Form 1 to Form 3 are known as Lower Secondary (*Menengah Rendah*), while Form 4 and 5 are known as Upper Secondary (*Menengah Atas*). Most students who had completed primary education are admitted to Form 1.

This study selects students only from Form 4 from three different schools as samples.

1.12.5 (Malaysian) Malay

Article 160 of the Malaysian Constitution defines Malay as someone born to a Malaysian citizen who professes to be a Muslim, habitually speaks the Malay language, adheres to Malay customs and is domiciled in Malaysia or Singapore. As of 2010, Malays made up of 51 percent of the population of Malaysia (Frifth T., 2010).

Although being the majority in Malaysia, this study also includes participants from other races namely Chinese and Indian.

1.12.6 (Malaysian) Chinese

The Malaysian Chinese, or also referred to as Chinese Malaysians, are Malaysians of Chinese origin. Most are descendants of Chinese who arrived between the first and the mid- twentieth centuries. Within Malaysia, they are simply referred

to as Chinese in all languages. As of 2010, approximately 24 percent of Malaysian population are of Chinese origin, constituting a quarter of Malaysian citizens (Yan, 2010).

In this study, majority of the students from the suburban school (SMK Taman Selesa Jaya) are Chinese. However, there are only twenty Chinese students selected from this school to avoid biased research outcome.

1.12.7 (Malaysian) Indian

Malaysian Indians are Malaysians of Indian origin. Many are descendants of those who migrated from India during the British colonization of Malaya. Today, they form the third largest ethnic group in Malaysia after the Malays and the Chinese. Malaysian Indians constitute 8 percent of the Malaysian population.

In this study, Indian students are distributed evenly in the urban, suburban and rural areas.

1.12.8 Urban

An urban area is known by its high density of population and vast human features compared to areas surrounding it. Cities, towns metropolitan are known as urban areas.

The urban area focused in this study is Johor Bahru, the second largest urban area in Malaysia. Its population is estimated at 900,000 in the city and nearly 2 million in the metropolitan area. The population of the District of Johor Bahru was

around 1,200,000 people in 2000. The population is 44 percent Malay, 41.5 percent Chinese, 9.1 percent Indian and 5.4 percent other minorities.

1.12.9 Suburban

Suburban is a residential area on the outskirts of the city. Suburban areas have lower population density compared to inner city neighbourhoods. It comprises of dense to semi-dense population areas. On a normal basis, it has a large community.

The suburban area focused in this study is Skudai, a fast- growing suburb of Johor Bahru. Its population ranges between 160,000 and 210, 000. As in the norm with many parts of southern Johor, many people in Skudai are from other states in Malaysia, attracted by the booming job opportunities and the double exchange rate in the neighbouring Singapore. This scenario has created many housing areas being developed as many local young people are also starting a family.

1.12.10 Rural

Rural areas are settlement areas outside the city and towns. Such areas are separated from the complex economy development that is eminent in cities and towns. More importantly, it is renowned by its feature of having less density population which are mostly sparsely populated areas.

Kota Tinggi is a town in the state of Johor, located around 42 kilometres north- east of Johor Bahru. This study will be focused at Tanjung Sedili, a

fisherman's village located in Kota Tinggi. Another location, Aping is one of the locations of Federal Land Development Authority (FELDA), a Malaysian government agency handling the resettlement of rural poor into new areas.

1.13   Conclusion

This chapter highlights the problem in second language learning, specifically learning of English among Malaysian secondary school students. The focus is on the constructed motivations and attitudes towards English language, as it is argued that it is crucial in determining the achievement in second language learning. However, as this study aimed to assist students to become a more proficient English speaker, it will also focus on finding out the factors that can influence the construction of motivations and attitudes such as evaluation apprehension, effects of important people on self and stereotype threat. Once the factors are identified, it is hoped that it can bring benefits to both teachers and students to learn English more effectively.

As guidance, this study will be conducted solely based on the objectives and research questions to the selected respondents.

Following chapters will discuss the literature review related to motivation, attitude and English Language learning.

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