

FACTORS AFFECTING MOTIVATION IN LEARNING ENGLISH  
AMONG STUDENTS IN SMK LEPAR UTARA

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## ABSTRACT

This study intended to determine the factors which contribute to motivation in learning English among the SMK Lepar Utara SPM students. Throughout this study, the results might partially reveal the reason of the existence of underachievement in the learning of English among students. The study was conducted with a questionnaire by Mohamed Amin, Juriah and Mohd Isa (2001) as an instrument which has been divided into four sections in order to collect the data effectively. Data was collected from a sample of 80 students from SMK Lepar Utara in Kuantan. Data was then analyzed using the SPSS version 20. The independent variables which were hypothesized factors were correlated with the dependent variable. Findings showed that parents, teachers and attitude do have influence in affecting the respondents' motivation yet only attitude and parents influence showed that there are significant relationship between them and motivation to learn English language. Demographic background data too showed that gender and students' examination result can also affect students' positive motivation. Besides that, learning style preferences also show that they have a relationship that is significant in motivating the learners in learning English.

## ABSTRAK

Tujuan kajian ini ialah untuk mengkaji faktor-faktor yang menyumbang kepada motivasi dalam mempelajari bahasa Inggeris di kalangan pelajar SPM di SMK Lepar Utara. Melalui kajian ini, keputusan yang diperolehi mungkin akan sedikit sebanyak menunjukkan factor kewujudan kelemahan pembelajaran di kalangan pelajar. Kajian ini diselidiki menerusi soalan borang soal selidik dari Mohamed Amin, Juriah and Mohd Isa (2001) sebagai bahan utama metodologi yang telah dibahagikan kepada empat bahagian untuk memudahkan pengumpulan data. Data kajian diperolehi dari 80 responden dari SMK Lepar Utara di Kuantan. Data telah dianalisa menggunakan perisian SPSS versi 20. Hasil kajian mendapati bahawa kesemua faktor guru, ibu bapa dan sikap pelajar mempengaruhi motivasi pelajar, namun begitu, hanya ibu bapa dan sikap pelajar sahaja yang menunjukkan wujudnya hubungan dengan motivasi pelajar. Selain itu, teknik pembelajaran juga menunjukkan ada hubungan dengan motivasi pelajar dalam mempelajari Bahasa Inggeris. Dalam analisa latar belakang pelajar juga mendapati bahawa jantina dan keputusan peperiksaan pelajar juga mempengaruhi motivasi yang positif di kalangan pelajar. Selain itu, teknik pembelajaran pelajar juga menunjukkan perkaitan yang jelas dalam memotivasikan pelajar dalam mempelajari Bahasa Inggeris.

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

#### **1.1 Introduction**

The English language plays an important role in today modern's world communication. The need is continuously increasing as the world rapidly moves towards globalization. The situation is also the same in this country, Malaysia. So, the need for the students to learn the second language has become greater in order to compete in today's world. Moreover in recent years, the Malaysian Government stresses on the use of English not only in schools but also in tertiary level by equipping the students with the proficiency of communicating in English.

Besides that, learning a second language also assists the students to gain achievement in other academic areas (Reich, 1986). Students who have acquired second language tend to become independent learners as they managed to express more positive attitudes towards school work. Reich (1986) also stated that when the students are truly fluent in both languages, their greater complex cognitive will help them to perform better on the required tasks as they could well-understand the contexts.

According to Santrock (2004), parents' involvement is one of the ways to increase students' achievement in learning. As a matter of fact, children are first engage with parents or family rather than the school environment. Based on Juel's (1998) study, one believes that to motivate a child to be a good language learner, parents should provide an early good modelling to their children. With the knowledge that the parents have from their own experiences of learning second language, they could actually help enhancing their children's second language acquisition. Parents of bilingual children boost a sense of community and promote a richer education (Moll, 1994). Thus, parents need to be aware the importance of their involvement in their children education.

In this study, we will look at how the Form Five students in SMK Lepar Utara acquiring English as the second language. Even though they are now in their eleventh years of schooling, English is generally taught using the translation method where most of the nouns and vocabulary still need to be defined either using the dictionary or with the teacher's explanation. Only a small number of the students learn English through full engagement method where they use English to hear and interact in the class. As supported by Cunningham and Graham (2000), this total immersion method does help the students become proficient quickly.

## **1.2 Background of the Study**

English language learning in Malaysia has been taught throughout all levels of education. In schooling years, English has been taught for almost 11 years and when the students enter tertiary level, they still learn English as one of their main subjects. However, the situation is still the same; that the level of English proficiency is still not at its best. As the students spend almost half of their day at educational

institutions, it would somehow naturally have some influences to their second language acquisition such as through the socialization with peers or teachers. Nevertheless, as most of the time, the students tend to use Malay as their main communication medium; it is quite difficult for the students to socialize with other races. As a result, there is little opportunity to use English to communicate.

As for the parenting aspect, everyone must work together to influence better outcomes of their children. Santrock (2003) believes that the processes of punishment, reinforcement and imitation allow the children to inculcate certain behaviours. He explains that when a child is reinforced for an acceptable behaviour, the child is likely to repeat it. Good parenting skill requires a lot of control issues management (Baumrind, 1991). The way the parents try to control or socialize their children will eventually affect the upcoming result. Therefore, it is assumed that the primary role of all parents is to influence, teach and control their children even before they move to schooling years.

Normally, Malaysian students from the normal daily school system are often passive but somehow they are good at memorizing and rote learning. Most of the time, the language teaching process mainly use linguistic and logical teaching methods. There are limited range of learning and teaching techniques been applied. These so-called traditional teaching methods generally rely on chalk and talk and book-based teaching, repetition and finally, for reinforcement and reviewing session, the system ends the learning chapters with apprehensive exams. Throughout the year, the students sit for exams up to 6 or 7 times a year, just to ensure the students are actually having the learning process according to the syllabus. Although quite a number of the students obtained good grades during their lower secondary schooling years, they are actually still having problem in communication skills in which hinder them from having good conversation in English environment. Hence, in order to learn English well, they need to become active learners.

Learning styles are also one of the main factors in determining the successful of students' learning process. Referring to (Sternberg & Williams, 2002), learning styles are approaches to learning and studying. Even though there are many different styles of learning that have been discussed, the most important thing is the initial and along-the-way approaches where within these two aspects, the real learning takes place. Yet, most of the time, the students learn; especially English, just for the sake of learning and as long as they pass their examinations, they would not have to worry about their real performance evaluation. For them, they just need to focus on memorizing the notes or materials given but not on understanding them. Even worse, students with difficulty tend to learn something which is easy and comfortable. According to Woolfolk (2004), some students prefer to learn in a certain way because they have no alternatives as it is the only way they know. Thus, the educators need to cater this issue so that the learning process is actually happening.

Good attitude in learning English is important as it shows that the learners are intrinsically motivated to learn. Dornyei and Csizer (1998) state that the rate and success of second language attainment is influenced greatly by learners' second language motivation. Without it, learning a second language might lead to ineffective grasp of the target language. Woolfolk (2004) stated that these motivated children are serious about getting the benefit from learning English. Hence, they find it interesting in completing English tasks given because they really appreciate the learning process. Additionally, parents play an important role in supporting the children through encouragement, modelling, facilitation and rewarding of goal setting (Sternberg & Williams, 2002). Thus, learning English will be easy for most students if they have good models, clear instructions and the opportunities for authentic practice (Woolfolk, 2004).

### 1.3 Statement of the Problem

These days, Malaysian workplace has changed its policy to employ graduate students, unlike those days, where people were hired based on their performance in school examination proven by the school certificates. Towards achieving the aims of Vision 2020, the demands are high and it is not easy to be fulfilled. Many employers in Malaysia criticize that our graduates are not that proficient in English. Proficiency in English is certainly one major factor that affects their chances in securing employment, especially in the private sector. After learning English as a second language for 11 years, the students still seem not to do well in that particular subject as they enter the tertiary level of education. It appears that they have poor command of English that make it hard for them to communicate as they need English for tertiary education or to seek employment.

As the students lacking of communicative skills, the approaches use in teaching English as a second language arise as one of the causes. It is believed that most of the difficulties happened because the students lack of using the second language as part of their medium of interaction as they tend to speak more Malay than English. The students often produce errors in using the target language resulting from the influence of their first language. Thus, communicative competence is an essential aspect in learning a language. One of the ways to achieve this competency is through the use of different technique like Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) in classroom. CLT aims to develop students' ability to use the language in real life contexts (Nesamalar, Saratha & Teh, 2005). This methodology helps the teacher to create communicative activities which can benefit the students in real life situations. Fauziah and Jamaluddin (2009) also mentioned that teachers' passion for the subject, which is naturally articulated and expressed through their motivating methodologies and creative approaches, has the power to influence the students' interest to learn better. Additionally, the teachers may employ using ICT in the class

setting. ICT has a strong motivational effect and positive effects on behaviour, communication and process skills (Scrimshaw, 2004).

Therefore, it is a need for Malaysian students particularly in SMK Lepar Utara to improve the level of English acquisition. These students need the language if they want to communicate when they enter the tertiary stage. They need to do well if they want to keep track of what is happening in today's modern world. English is an international medium of communication, thus it is fundamental that the students master the language in order to understand today's modern and technology-related terminology besides ensuring them better career opportunities. However, what hinder this fulfilment is the motivation in learning English among the students.

There are many factors that seem to contribute to the motivation in learning English among the Form Five students in SMK Lepar Utara, such as parental and teacher influences and learning styles in school as well as students' own attitude towards English. Hence, this study will attempt to identify the relationship between all these factors in relation to the motivation in learning English among the Form Five students in SMK Lepar Utara in Kuantan.

#### **1.4 Purpose of the Study**

Parents and teachers play important role in assisting and motivating the students to achieve better result in school. Besides that, other factors such as personal attitude and learning style also affect the students' motivation in learning. Thus, the purpose of the study is to find out whether all these factors actually have an influence on students' motivation in English; their second language. This is important as to

help the teachers to find ways to encourage the students to learn the target language effectively. Besides, it is essential to make sure that learners do not have any negative perception and low motivation in learning English; in order to make sure that the learning process takes place successfully.

### **1.5 The Research Objectives**

This study seeks to examine the relationship between all the factors towards motivation in learning English among the Form Five students in SMK Lepar Utara.

The objectives are:

- (i)
  - a) To determine which factors; personal attitude, teacher influence and parental influence that contribute most towards Form Five students' motivation towards learning English.
  - b) To identify the relationship between the factors; personal attitude, teacher influence and parental influence and the demographic data (gender, ethnic groups, first language used and English Mid-Year Examination grade) among the Form Five students in SMK Lepar Utara.
- (ii)
  - a) To determine which learning style; visual learning style, verbal learning style and aural learning style is preferred most by Form Five students towards learning English.

- b) To identify the relationship between learning style; visual learning style, verbal learning style and aural learning style and the demographic data (gender, ethnic groups, first language used and English Mid-Year Examination grade) among the Form Five students in SMK Lepar Utara.
- iii)
- a) To determine which type of motivation; instrumental and integrative, is more prominent in learning English among the Form Five students in SMK Lepar Utara.
  - b) To identify the relationship between students' motivation (instrumental and integrative) towards learning English and the demographic data (gender, ethnic groups, first language used and English Mid-Year Examination grade) among the Form Five students in SMK Lepar Utara.
  - c) To identify relationships between students' motivation (instrumental and integrative) towards learning English and the factors (personal attitude, teacher influence and parental influence) among the Form Five students in SMK Lepar Utara.
  - d) To identify the relationships between students' motivation (instrumental and integrative) towards learning English and the learning style (visual learning style, verbal learning style and aural learning style) among the Form Five students in SMK Lepar Utara.



## 1.6 The Research Questions

The research questions are:

- (i) a) Which factors; personal attitude, teacher influence and parental influence that contribute most towards Form Five students' motivation towards learning English?  
b) Are there significant relationships between the factors; personal attitude, teacher influence and parental influence and the demographic data (gender, ethnic groups, first language used and English Mid-Year Examination grade) among the Form Five students in SMK Lepar Utara?
- (iii) a) Which learning style; visual learning style, verbal learning style and aural learning style that is most preferred by Form Five students towards learning English?  
b) Are there significant relationships between learning style; visual learning style, verbal learning style and aural learning style and the demographic data (gender, ethnic groups, first language used and English Mid-Year Examination grade) among the Form Five students in SMK Lepar Utara?
- (ii) a) Which type of motivation; instrumental and integrative is more prominent in learning English among the Form Five students in SMK Lepar Utara?  
b) Are there significant relationships between students' motivation (instrumental and integrative) towards learning English and the demographic data (gender, ethnic groups, first language used and English Mid-Year Examination grade) among the Form Five students in SMK Lepar Utara?

- c) Are there significant relationships between students' motivation (instrumental and integrative) towards learning English and the factors (personal attitude, teacher influence and parental influence) among the Form Five students in SMK Lepar Utara?
  
- d) Are there significant relationships between students' motivation (instrumental and integrative) towards learning English and the learning style (visual learning style, verbal learning style and aural learning style) among the Form Five students in SMK Lepar Utara?

### **1.7 Significance of the Study**

The finding of this research could be of significant interest to SMK Lepar Utara English teachers as well as the administrators in developing policies, programmes and activities that could motivate their students in the second language acquisition process; especially in learning English. Besides that, the English teachers involved would also try to improve themselves in terms of their teaching skills that are more appealing to cater to the needs of the students in learning English in a better situation.

This study would provide parents a better understanding of the importance of doing well in English in their children's future. Parents allow the development to be internalized by their children through modelling, imitation, reinforcement and other forms of parental discipline (Lapsley, 1996). Thus, parents need to understand that they are also one of the factors that lead to their children's proficiency in the second language.

Through this study, the students would learn the importance of English proficiency as it will motivate them to learn better for future employment. As supported by Mahathir (1991), the acquisition of English language is one of the most important issues in future workplace as the employers prefer employees who could communicate well, adapt through creative thinking and problem-solving skills using the international language.

Lastly, this study might motivate the students as the language learners to know that there would be a lot of advantages to them if they acquired better level of proficiency in a second language especially in English. As such, good English proficiency would help them to keep on track with the changes in today's technological-innovated world. This will also boost their motivation in interacting confidently and efficiently with other people around the world.

## **1.8 Scope of the Study**

This study will concentrate on the factors that influence the students' motivation in learning English as ESL. The study will be conducted among rural students in SMK Lepar Utara, Kuantan who are going to sit for their SPM examination. So, there are about 80 students selected for respondents. For this study, data will be collected via questionnaires provided to students. The data obtained will identify what are the relationships between all those factors towards students' motivation in learning English and thus, will be crucial in helping the teacher to cater to the needs of the students to learn the language effectively.

## **1.9 Limitations of the Study**

This study has several limitations. First, the sample of the research from a quite rural school in Kuantan, Pahang may not be generalized to the other schools in Malaysia.

Though, the teaching methods in SMK Lepar Utara have been imparted in the educational system but, it may not be the same as other schools in Malaysia. So, all the results gain in the end of the study and the intended changes might not be suitable to be implemented in other places.

Besides, the study also limited to the time frame provided and the result obtained may not be as accurate as intended.

Finally, all the respondents' answers are based on their own interests, understanding or perception towards English. Thus, the answers for the questionnaires are subjective and may not reflect the researcher's ideas perfectly that would affect the data. It is assumed that data collected was unbiased and correct.

## **1.10 The Conceptual Framework**

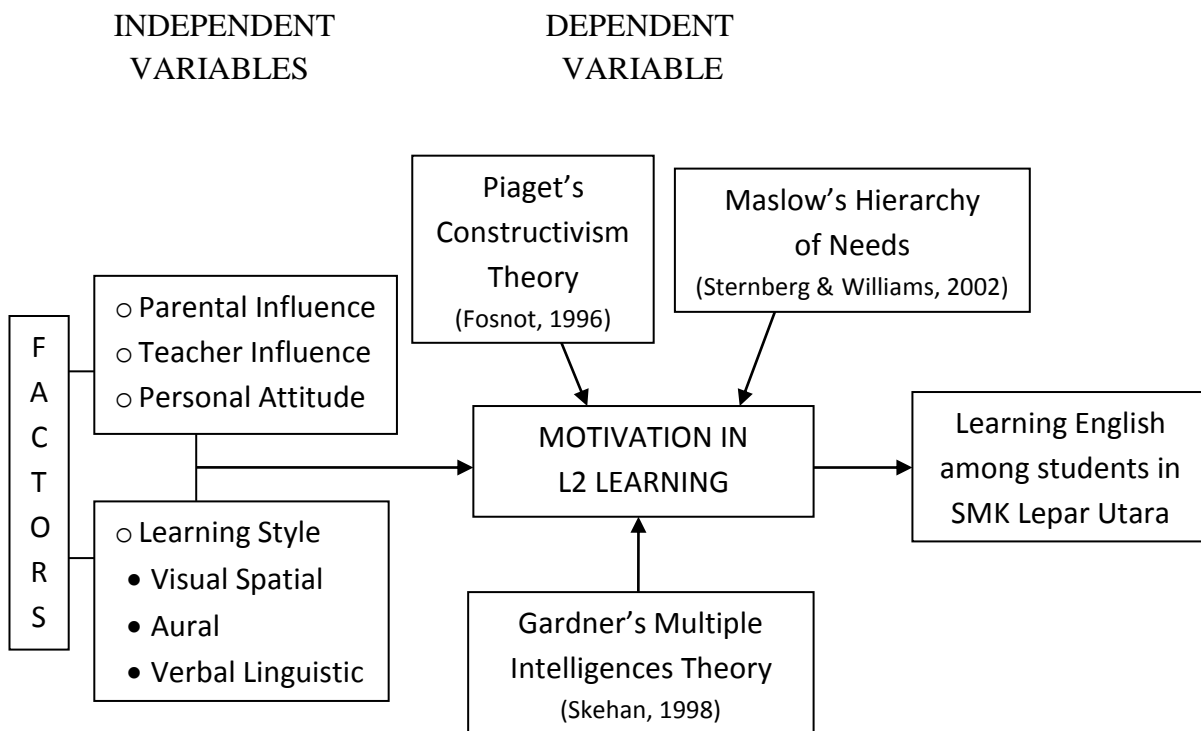
Figure 1.1 below shows the entire concept of this research that will guide the focus of the study on looking for relationship between all the factors (parental, teacher, personal attitude and learning style) and motivation. In finding the

relationships between the factors and the motivation in learning English among the students, all the related theories used in this study are discussed to support findings; based on the survey that will be conducted. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, Constructivism and Multiple Intelligences theories explain language learning development differently but each contributes unique perspectives on the process. As shown in figure 1.1, all the theories' approaches contribute to motivation in learning English among students.

Factors such as parents' influences and teachers' role affect students' proficiency. It is believed that there are relationships between parental and teacher influences towards motivation among students in learning English. This shows that how students' motivation can be affected by the people close to them during the learning process. Besides that, it is also assumed that there are relationships between students' own attitude and students' learning styles and their motivation in learning English. Referring to Figure 1.1, it can be hypothesized that while all factors identified may affect the SMK Lepar Utara students' motivation in learning English, the theories related may help in explaining how to positively motivate students' motivation in the L2 learning.

Ultimately, the results will help in finding out what is the relationship between all those factors and motivation in learning English; which help to boost the second language learning process among students in SMK Lepar Utara.

**Figure 1.1: Conceptual Framework**



The proposed model shows the relationship between the independent variables and dependent variable in this study.

## 1.11 Definition of Terms

### 1.11.1 English as a Second Language

English as a second language (ESL) refers to the use or study of English by speakers with different native languages (Harmer, 2007). English is like the other

languages. The learners need to learn how to pronounce the words, understanding the meaning, grammar skills as part of the speech in order to become effective language learners. Yet, the learners' difficulties may fall on the vocabulary part as there has been a strong influence from the first language (Hedge, 2000). In Malaysia, English is considered as second language, after Bahasa Malaysia because of the importance of it in today's world where English is the internationally accepted medium of communication.

As a second language, the role of English language in Malaysia is fast changing from being the language for education to being a tool of communication in limited circumstances. English is essential for employment opportunities and for higher education. Despite having English as a second language at those fields, the intensity of use of the language and the level of proficiency is still below the target (Mohd Bakri, 2003). Therefore, comprehensive steps must be taken so that the Malaysian learners could learn and practice the language better in order to compete internationally and steadily moving on the fast track towards accomplishing Vision 2020.

### **1.11.2 Motivation**

Motivation means that the way people behave because of four involving aspects which are a goal, an effort, a desire to attain the goal and favourable attitude toward the activity being done (Gardner, 1985; cited in Woolfolk, 2004). In other words, motivation means the forces that account for the selection and continuation of behaviour as a direction towards achieving the goal. In terms of this study, motivation is the emotions and needs which actually drive the students to learn

second language; English in a better way. The level of motivation among the students is also believed to be affected by numbers of factors mentioned earlier.

### **1.11.3 Parenting Style**

Parenting styles are “patterns of parenting behaviours that occur over a wide range of situations, thereby creating a persistent and enduring child-rearing climate” (Berk, 2003). Parents are children’s first teachers from birth and assume roles in their children’s education. According to Baumrind (1991), parenting styles come in four main forms: authoritarian, neglectful, indulgent and authoritative.

Authoritarian parents are highly demanding and directive, but not responsive. This style of parenting are obedience and status-oriented, and expect their orders to be obeyed without explanation (Baumrind, as cited in Sternberg & Williams, 2002). Hence, if the children disobey such orders, authoritarian parents resort to force and punishment.

Then, the uninvolved parent styles show little commitment to care-giving and always being struggling with their own stresses and problems. Children, whose parents rarely interact with them, show little interest in school, poor in emotional self-regulation and school performance (Berk, 2003).

In contrast, indulgent parents are more likely better compared to neglectful parents. According to Berk (2003), indulgent parenting style involves parents who are always nurturing and accepting. They allow children to make their own decisions



without their help or support. This form of parenting results in children not being able to control their behaviour, emotions and always expect to see things done their way (Santrock, 2004).

Next, the authoritative parenting style is claimed to be the most effective way in producing best children learning process. According to Baumrind (1991), these parenting styles are assertive, but not intrusive and restrictive. They encourage their children to enjoy learning and create a balance of positive and negative criticism to motivate learning. Good parenting style will boost children motivation for their positive self-development as well as their attitude towards learning.

#### **1.11.4 Teacher's role**

In this study, most of the SMK Lepar Utara teachers who teach English in that school are not the native speakers of English. So, their role is to provide fundamental changes with the delivery of a multidimensional second-language programme (Hedge, 2000). They need to create environment and develop activities so that students are able to practise the language in a meaningful context. It is teacher's responsibilities to develop students' positive attitude in learning English as a second language. Students are not motivated to learn when teachers resort to traditional methods of teaching (Sternberg & Williams, 2002). So, the teachers need to vary their teaching methods in order to cater to the needs of the students. They need to be versatile in their teaching strategies. Hence, the teacher acts as facilitator, resource person and language model for the second language classroom by inventing ways to encourage students to communicate meaningfully with each other.

### 1.11.5 Learning styles

Many people recognize that each person prefers different learning styles and techniques. Learning styles can be defined as the preferred way of learning during learning process and it is among the main factors that help to determine how well our students learn a second language. Students learn and gain knowledge through different ways. They may do so by seeing and hearing, reflecting and acting, reasoning logically and intuitively, analyzing and visualizing. Using multiple learning styles and multiple intelligences for learning is a relatively new approach. Therefore, identifying the different learning styles preferred by the students has wide-ranging implications in the areas of curriculum design, materials development, student orientation, and teacher training (Oxford, 1990).

Traditional schooling used (and continues to use) mainly linguistic and logical teaching methods. It also uses a limited range of learning and teaching techniques. Many schools still rely on classroom and book-based teaching, much repetition, and pressured exams for reinforcement and review which lead to low quality of teaching. Therefore, by assessing the learning styles use of their students, second language teachers could gain benefit because such assessment leads to greater understanding of what teaching strategies can be integrated into language instruction to encourage the students to learn the language more effectively.

### **1.11.6 Attitudes**

Attitudes can be defined as a learned tendency to evaluate things in a certain way (Mackie & Smith, 2007). This can include evaluations of many things, which are often positive or negative, but they can also be uncertain at times. In some cases, people may actually alter their attitudes in order to better align them with their behaviour. In this study, attitudes is believed to have a very clear link with motivation on language learning process (Ellis, 1997). Students with positive attitudes will have a better level of motivation, thus will be more successful compared to those with negative attitudes and no motivation. Therefore, as attitude is regarded as one of the key factors that contribute to second language learning achievement, both positive attitude and motivation need to coexist together in order to achieve a successful language learning experience. (Spolsky, 1989).

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