Motivation in Learning English as Second Language of Secondary Students in
Semi-rural Secondary School

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To my beloved father and mother,

and

my friend, Shia Yoke Lin

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ABSTRACT

The study was conducted to determine the level of motivation towards learning English in a semi rural secondary school. The study also aims to investigate if there is a relationship between motivation towards learning and the language achievement in English. A quantitative research method was employed. Through a questionnaire, data was collected and analyzed using statistical method. Prior to the study, reliability test was conducted beforehand using Cronbach Alpha method to select and finalized the items in questionnaire. Selected items were adopted from Gardner's (1985) Attitude/ Motivation Test Battery (AMTB). The subjects of the study were selected from Form Four students in SMK Taman Desa Skudai. About 110 students consist of different level of English proficiency, involved in the study. For each item, data was analyzed using SPSS 20 to determine its frequency, mean score, standard deviation. The findings indicate that the motivation of the subjects is above average. Pearson-correlation was computed to determine the relationship between variables in the study. A significant relationship was found between the motivation towards learning English and the learning achievement in English.

Keywords: motivation, language learning, language achievement

ABSTRAK

Kajian telah dijalankan untuk menentukan tahap motivasi pelajar terhadap pembelajaran Bahasa Inggeris di sebuah sekolah menengah jenis luar Bandar. Kajian juga bertujuan meninjau sama ada wujudnya hubungan antara motivasi pembelajaran Bahasa Inggeris dengan pencapaian dalam Bahasa Inggeris. Kaedah kuantitatif telah diaplikasikan dalam kajian ini. Menerusi soal selidik, data dikumpul dan dianalisiskan dengan kaedah statistik. Sebelum kajian dilaksanakan, ujian keboleh-percayaan dengan kaedah *Cronbach Alpha* digunakan untuk memilih dan menentukan item dalam soal selidik. Item dipilih dengan rujukan daripada *Gardner's (1985) Attitude/ Motivation Test Battery* (*AMTB*). Subjek kajian dipilih daripada pelajar Tingkatan Empat SMK Taman Desa Skudai. Sebanyak 110 orang merangkumi tahap kemahiran Bahasa Inggeris yang berbeza telah dipilih. Bagi setiap item, data telah dianalisis dengan *SPSS 20* untuk menentukan kekerapan, skor purata dan sisihan piawai setiap item. Perolehan kajian menunjukkan motivasi subjek adalah sederhana atas. *Pearson-correlation* digunakan untuk menentukan hubungan antara pembolehubah dalam kajian. Hubungan penting didapati wujud antara motivasi pembelajaran Bahasa Inggeris dengan pencapaian dalam Bahasa Inggeris.

Kata- kata kunci: motivasi, pembelajaran Bahasa Inggeris, pencapaian Bahasa Inggeris

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES

LIST OF APPENDICES

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Students' motivation is pivotal in learning English. Without motivation towards learning English, students would not put much effort and have much desire to learn English as English is a second language in Malaysia. Gardner (2001, p2) posited "motivation is a central element along with language aptitude in determining success in learning another language in the classroom setting".

Many studies were undertaken in the university level to investigate the students' motivation and attitudes towards learning English in Malaysia (Ainol Madziah and Isarji, 2009; Samsiah, Kamaruzaman, Nurazila, Musdiana and Taniza, 2009; Thang, 2004). Researches also have been done to investigate the students' motivation and attitudes in the context of learning English as second language in secondary and primary school in Malaysia (Thang *et al*., 2010; Melor and Nur Rashidah, 2011). It was found that the students in Malaysia are motivated by factors such as desire to get good grades, opportunities to further their studies and career advancement to improve their English. However, most of these studies in Malaysia only reveal the students' motivation and attitude in learning English. Less emphasis is given in the studies concerning the relationship between the motivation of students and their learning achievement in learning English as second language in Malaysia.

Furthermore, English being one of the nation's official languages is in itself a strong driving force for learning English. In contra, Malaysian students do not seem to be able to attain reasonable English literacy even after going through 11 years of learning English in school (Naginder, 2006; Nor Hashimah, Norsimah Mat Awal and Kesumawati, 2008). In addition, the graduates' level of English proficiency also seems to be under the level of satisfactory according to the studies focusing on English language proficiency among Malaysian university graduates (Isarji *et al.*, 2008). It was reported in *The Star* newspaper (September 19, 2011) that employers are worry about the unsatisfactory level of English of university graduates in Malaysia. It was voiced out at the Malaysia Career and Training Fair 2011.

Many students in Malaysia do not feel that learning English is a necessity as English is not the main communication medium in Malaysia. Instead of English, students can speak in Malay language or their own mother tongue such as Mandarin, Tamil, Cantonese and others in accomplish daily activities such as buying things in shopping center, eating in a restaurant or food stall, taking a taxi orbus and so on.

In a wider perspective, incompetency of the students in Malaysia to communicate confidently in English, to a certain extent, could result the country's competitiveness in the globalization era to be jeopardized.

1.1   Background

Language is part of our life and is necessary to communicate and participate in a society or community. Though English is a second language in Malaysia, the significance of English as the world wide language is clearly stated. English is a global language, which is widely used in technology, higher education, business, internet, and science (Nunan, 2003). The importance of learning English is

concerned by the Ministry of Education and it is clearly stated in the Malaysia Education Blueprint (2013-2025):

"Every child will be, at minimum, operationally proficient in Malay language as the national language and in English as the international language of communication. This means that upon leaving school, the student should be able to work in both a Bahasa Malaysia and English language environment." (Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025, p16)

Learning English as second language is different from learning the mother tongue among most of the students in Malaysia. People can learn the mother tongue more easily because they are exposed to the language in daily activities since young age. However, this is not for learning English as they do not realize the needs to speak English. Thus, motivation is essential in learning second language and to foster acquisition of learning second language among the second language learners. Motivation plays a very important role in learning second languages (Gardner, 2006; Lambert, 1963). According to Krashen's (1982) fifth hypothesis, the Affective Filter Hypothesis, it was also claimed that, students' motivation to learn the language is one of the most important affective variables that influences the second language acquisition. Moreover, the motivation of learning is closely related to their attitudes towards the language learning. It referred to the individual's attitudes, desires, and effort to learn the second language (Gardner, 1985). Furthermore, according to Gardner (1985), it is claimed that motivation has direct effect on language achievement. Dornyei and Noels' study (1994) on the achievement in English language of Hungarian students also revealed that the language achievement was significantly related to the motivational indices. Students' motivation towards learning English is considered essential in affecting their learning achievement. As a consequence, motivation plays a very important role in learning second languages. Without motivation, students may not have the initiative to learn, which results the students in a poor English proficiency, especially in the rural region. It might be one of the reasons that might elucidate the finding obtained in Normazidah *et al.*'s study (2011). In her study, it was found that Form Four students of a semi-urban

secondary school unable to master basic grammatical structures even though they have gone through 11 years of learning English since their primary level.

In Malaysia Education Blueprint (2013-2025), English language is emphasized in the Malaysian education system. Every child is ensured to be proficient in the language after leaving school. Under the plan, programme such as LINUS programme is planned to upgrade the proficiency level among Malaysian students. However, in real Malaysia language learning classroom, many students attend to class with a passive mindset and low motivation. Learning is more teacher-centered rather than students participate actively in the classroom activities. Discussion and classroom teaching mostly is conducted by using chalk-and-talk method because the education in Malaysia is too exam-oriented. The most popular method that teachers used is drilling using work sheets, exercise books and past-year examination questions (Ambigapathy, 2002).

In Normazidah and her fellows' study (2011), it was claimed that motivation is currently lacking in Malaysia education system. Lack of motivation to learn English among the learners as they do not see the immediate need to use the language has been identified as one of the causes of limited English proficiency among Malaysian learners (Ambigapathy, 2002, 2006; Fauziah and Nita, 2002; Mohd Sofi Ali, 2008; Naginder, 2006; Noor Hashimah, 2007; Razianna, 2005; Rosemala, 2008; Zaira, 2008).

1.2   Problem Statement

Based on the Education Ministry statistics on students' performance, it was found that the achievement of Malaysian students in English language in SPM (Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia *Malaysian Certificate of Education*) examination is comparative lower than Malay language.   The percentage of students who passed (at least grade E) in English language in 2010 SPM (Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia *Malaysian Certificate of Education*) in urban and rural area school was 83.7% and 71.2% respectively, whereas, the percentage of students who passed the Malay language in urban and rural area school was 91.4% and 89.7% respectively.   The statistics revealed that there are still many Malaysian secondary students particularly students in the rural region achieved a low performance in English.   It was reported in Malaysia Education Blueprint (2013-2025) that only 28% of students achieved a minimum credit in the 2011 SPM English paper against Cambridge 1119 standards. In addition to that, since 2006, poor English proficiency among fresh graduates has also been consistently ranked as one of the top five issues facing Malaysian employers (Malaysia Education Blueprint (2013-2025).

To understand the problem of the study, the current situation of learning English among form four students of semi-rural region school, SMK Taman Desa Skudai was studied.   Based on the comments given by English teachers of the school, the motivation of students towards learning English is very low. Many students do not have initiative to learn English and attend to the class with passive mindset.   To illustrate, students' performance in SMK Taman Desa Skudai was studied.   In 2011, the average grade of student in English in SPM is 6.29 which is equivalent to grade D.   The percentage of students who passed in English is 79.31% (184 out of 232 candidates).   Students who scored grade A and above was only 8 but scored D or E was 85, a much higher number in lower grade indicating a poor proficiency in English.   In addition, another 48 students even failed in English. This statistics showed that the students have low performance in English.   The low proficiency in English among the students could involve many factors.   Motivation may be one of the reasons of low proficiency in English.   The poor performance of the students may

due to lacking of motivation to learn English among the learners. Based on the findings in previous researches (Ambigapathy, 2002, 2006; Fauziah and Nita, 2002; Mohd Sofi Ali, 2008; Naginder, 2006), Noor Hashimah, 2007; Razianna, 2005); Rosemala, 2008; Zaira, 2008), motivation is one of the reasons of the low English proficiency among Malaysian learners.

Hence, research study is conducted to investigate the motivation towards the English language among the upper secondary students in a semi-rural school. The research also intends to examine the relationship between the students' motivation and the learning English achievement. With the information obtained from the research might able to provide in-depth picture of students' motivation towards learning the second language. Thus, based on the findings in the research, teachers could have a better understanding regarding the relationship between the motivation of learning English and their learning achievement in English language. This might help teachers to develop a better and more efficient learning method in future to improve the students' achievement in English.

The purpose of this research is to find out:

1. What are their motivations towards learning English?
1. Is there any relationship between their motivation towards learning English and their language achievement in English?

1.3   Research Objectives

The objectives of this study are:

1. to investigate the motivation index of students towards learning English.

2. to study the motivation of the students in learning English based on the three dimensions; namely motivational intensity, desire to learn English, and attitudes toward learning English.

3. to assess students' attitudes toward the context in which languages are taught based on two dimensions (English Teacher Evaluation , and English Course Evaluation)

4. to examine attitudinal reactions applicable to the learning of a second language which involves the other language community or other groups in general based on three dimensions; namely integrative orientation, the interest in foreign languages, and attitudes toward English-speaking people.

5. to find out the relationship between the motivation towards learning English and the language achievement.

1.4   Research Questions

This study focuses on the following research questions:

1. What is the motivation index of students towards learning English?
2. What is the motivation of students towards learning English based on the three dimensions; namely motivational intensity, desire to learn English, and attitudes toward learning English?
3. What are the students' attitudes toward the context in which languages are taught based on two dimensions (English Teacher Evaluation and English Course Evaluation)?
4. What are the attitudinal reactions applicable to the learning of English language, which involves the other language community or other groups in general, based on three dimensions; namely integrative orientation, the interest in foreign languages, and attitudes toward English-speaking people?
5. What is the relationship between the motivation towards learning English and the learning achievement in English?

1.5   Significance of the study

Learning second language is different from learning the first language. In fact, it is more challenging than learning the first language. Most of us learn the first language at ease because we absorb the language naturally and comprehend the rules that languages follow since we are born. Most students have passive attitudes toward learning English due to the previous experience that English is hard to learn and it is observed that students in the current school systems are feeling hopeless and helpless because teachers lack the skills needed to help them develop motivation. The

outcome of the study might shed light on the students' motivation learning English in the secondary school as well as their reasons of learning English. This might benefit the English teachers in the aspects of their teaching methods and learning activities in order to create a learning environment that is conducive to foster positive attitudes and to motivate students in learning English actively. The learning in the classroom must able to allow the students to relate the learning to the real world communication outside the classroom (Krashen, 1982).

The outcome of the study might provide a clearer picture for the school English teachers and the school administrators regarding the students' motivation in learning English and the relationship between the motivation and the students' learning English achievement. In practice, this could be used as a foundation for school teachers to select activities and tasks that tap students' motivation and improve their achievements. This may also provide useful guidelines for teachers concerned with developing English-language instruction that will be beneficial in encouraging students to improve their motivation and their achievement (Chalermporn Choosri and Usa Intharaksa, 2011)

Motivation plays an essential role in language achievement. Additionally, different levels of their achievements may be impacted by the students' motivation towards learning English. It is, therefore, essential to investigate the relationship between motivation and students' English learning achievement. The knowledge gained from this study can add to the data base for practice, research and theory. Generally, the theoretical framework of Gardner and Lambert (1972) has been used in the western educational context to the motivation of students in language learning. It is, therefore, a necessary to conduct a research in order to understand the relationship between motivation and English learning achievement in the eastern context, a setting of Malaysia education system in particular.

1.6 Definition of terms

1.6.1 Motivation

Gardner (1985) defined motivation to learn an L2 as "the extent to which the individual works or strives to learn the language because of a desire to do so and the satisfaction experienced in this activity". According to the definition, motivation is classified into three components: effort to achieve a goal, desire to learn the language, and satisfaction with the task of learning the language. The Motivational Intensity, Desire to Learn the Language, and Attitude toward Learning the Language scales of the Attitude/ Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) (Gardner, 1985) are implemented to access these three components.

1.6.2 Effort to achieve a goal

The notions of instrumental and integrative motivation were introduced by Gardner and Lambert (1972). Integrative motivation refers to the desire to learn a language in order to interact with the people of the second language group. On the other hand, instrumental motivation is defined as the learner's desire to learn a language because the language serves a useful function in the context of language learning such as employment or travel or exam purposes.

1.6.3   Desire to learn the language

Desire to learn the target language, is concerned with the assessing the extent to which the individual wants to achieve a high level of competence in the language. Gardner and Lambert (1972) wrote, "…a person prepares to learn a code in order to derive benefits from a non-interpersonal sort" and their language skills develop as a "desire to gain social recognition or economic advantages through knowledge of a foreign language".

1.6.4   Attitude towards learning

Attitude is a set of beliefs developed in a period of time in a given situation. Attitude of learners play a very important role in the learning process and is responsible for their achievement in the learning. There were many statements given by researchers to define the attitude. Attitudes are categorized into three components namely cognitive, affective and behavioral (Wenden, 1991).   These three components are very closely related to each other. Therefore, attitudes of the learners can be identified just by measuring one of the components. It was supported by Van Els *et al.* (1984) that "it does not really matter whether all or only one of the three components are measured; the relationship between the components is so close that sufficient information on an attitude can be obtained by measuring only one component, no matter which".

Learning is affected by the attitudes possessed by learners. It is studied that positive attitude facilitates learning. The learner will not produce any result if the learner is reluctant to learn or he/she does not have a positive attitude towards the learning. Karahan (2007) posited that "positive language attitudes enable learner has positive orientation towards learning English". The learners' attitudes towards

learning are affected by their perceptions, such as the perception of the class, perception of the teacher, peer group, syllabus and also their awareness of the language for future needs.

Furthermore, attitude of the learners towards languages learning is closely related to the language learning (Starks and Paltridge, 1996). Instead of defining attitude alone, according to Gardner (1985), attitudes are defined as components of motivation in language learning. Motivation refers to the effort and desire to achieve the goal of learning the language as well as the positive attitudes toward learning the language.

1.6.5 Students' English language achievement

Students' English language achievement is referred to the grade obtained by the students in English Language for the PMR (Penilaian Menengah Rendah *Lower Secondary Assessment*) which is a public examination for the lower secondary students in Malaysia. Students who obtained Grade A were categorized as High Proficiency (HP) students, Grade B as Average Proficiency (AP), Grade C, D as low proficiency (LP) students and Grade E as Very Low Proficiency (VLP) students (Thang, Ting and Nurjanah, 2010).

1.6.6   The Attitude Motivation Test Battery (AMTB)

The AMTB (Gardner, 1985) was developed to measure the various components of the socio-educational model of second language acquisition. The Attitude Motivation Test Battery has been employed by many researchers (Thang *et al.*, 2010; Qashoa, 2006; Azizeh and Zohreh, 2010; Sayid and Milad, 2011) in previous studies on the research of motivation of learning second language.

1.6.6.1 Motivation

There are many facets of motivation that can be examined but Gardner (1972) believes that "the fundamentals are best identified by three measures that assess effort and persistence, the desire to learn the language, and affective reactions to learning the language. Any one, in and of itself, does not properly encompass the many features of the motivated individual, but it is felt that these three do an adequate job in this regard". In the socio-educational model, it is assumed that attitudes toward the learning situation and integrativeness are the major supports for motivation, though, under some circumstances, instrumentality could also has the same purpose.

The three measures in the AMTB (1985) used to assess motivation are: Motivational intensity (MI), Desire to learn the language (DESIRE), Attitudes toward learning the language (ALL).

1.6.6.2 Attitudes toward the language situation

Attitudes toward the learning situation refer to students' affective reactions to the language learning context in class such as the quality and accessibility of the materials, the curriculum, and the teacher and so on. In the AMTB, these attitudes are assessed in terms of the students' evaluation of the teacher and the class. The two measures are: Language teacher evaluation and Language class evaluation (Gardner, 1985).

1.6.6.3 Integrativeness

As measured in the AMTB, integrativeness is about affective reactions of the students towards the native speakers, a general interest in foreign groups, and desire to learn English for integrative (Gardner, 1985).

Three measures in the AMTB are: Integrative orientation (IO), Interest in foreign languages (IFL), Attitudes toward the language community (ALC).

1.7   Framework of the Study

This study was based on Gardner and Lambert's theory (1959), which defined motivation as the combination of effort plus desire to achieve the goal of learning the language. According to the adapted version of socioeducational model

(Gardner, 2001), the variables impacting on students' achievement are shown as the Figure 1.1.
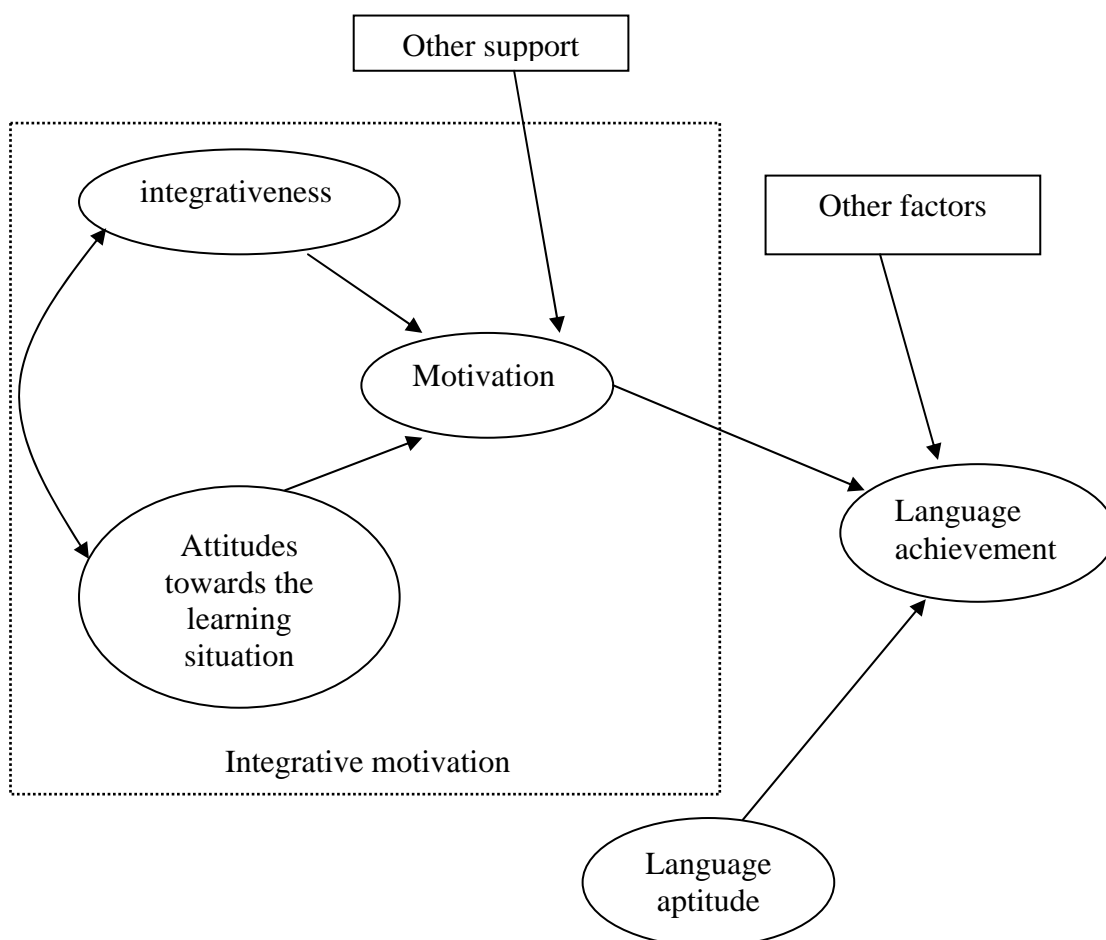

Figure 1.1   Socio-educational model adopted from Gardner (2001).

Through the lens of Gardner and Lambert's theory, this research focused on the motivation of learning the second language which is affected by integrativeness and attitudes towards the learning situation. The theoretical framework of this study is illustrated in Figure 1.2.

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┌──────────────────┐
│  Integrativeness │──┐
└──────────────────┘  │    ┌────────────────┐      ┌────────────────┐
                      ├───▶│   Motivation   │─────▶│   Language     │
┌──────────────────┐  │    │                │      │   Achievement  │
│  Attitudes       │──┘    └────────────────┘      └────────────────┘
│  towards the     │
│  learning        │
└──────────────────┘
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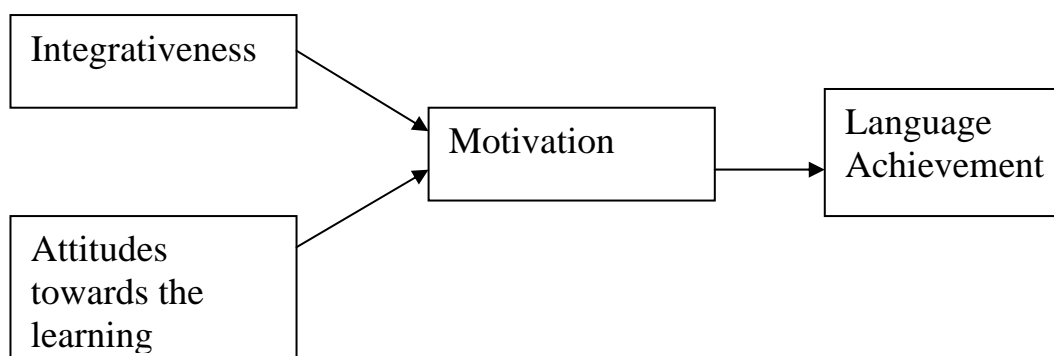
Figure 1.2   Theoretical Framework of the Study adapted from Gardner's Socioeducational Model (2001)

Gardner's Socioeducational Model (2001) 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. 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. However, it was the integrative motivation that was most stressed by Gardner and it was in fact the backbone of his model (figure 1.1). 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.

The role of attitudes towards the learned language, its speakers and the learning situation are all considered parts of the integrative motivation. 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.

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