A STUDY ON SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS' PERCEPTIONS OF THEIR MOTIVATION AND ATTITUDE TOWARDS LEARNING THE ENGLISH LITERATURE COMPONENT

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of Bachelor of Science with Education (TESL)

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For my mama and ayah... Fadzilah and Adi...

My sister and brother... Kak Ami and An..

And

Everyone who loves me and

are loved in return...

You know who you are...

Thank you for always have been there for me....
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ABSTRAK

Kajian ini bertujuan untuk menyelidiki persepsi, motivasi dan sikap pelajar-pelajar sekolah menengah terhadap pembelajaran komponen sastera Bahasa Inggeris yang terkandung di dalam silibus KBSM. Seramai 60 orang pelajar perempuan dalam Tingkatan Empat telah dipilih sebagai responden kajian ini. Satu set soal selidik telah dibina untuk tujuan mengumpul maklumat daripada responden tentang motivasi dan sikap mereka terhadap pembelajaran komponen sastera Bahasa Inggeris. Secara keseluruhannya, keputusan kajian menunjukkan pelajar-pelajar sekolah menengah yang terlibat mempunyai motivasi instrumental dan intrinsik yang sangat tinggi, motivasi integratif yang agak tinggi namun hanya mempunyai motivasi ektrinsik yang rendah terhadap pembelajaran komponen sastera Bahasa Inggeris. Di samping itu, keputusan kajian juga menunjukkan bahawa pelajar-pelajar ini mempunyai sikap positif terhadap pembelajaran komponen sastera Bahasa Inggeris kerana mereka sanggup mengambil langkah-langkah yang wajar untuk memastikan kejayaan mereka dalam pembelajaran sastera dah Bahasa Inggeris. Sebagai kesimpulan, beberapa cadangan untuk meningkatkan tahap motivasi dan sikap positif pelajar telah diberi. Cadangan-cadangan yang boleh diambil kira untuk kajian seterusnya juga telah dimasukkan di dalam bahagian akhir kajian ini.
This study was carried out to investigate the secondary school students’ perceptions of their motivations and attitudes towards the learning of English literature component of the KBSM syllabus. A total of sixty female Form Four students were selected based on convenient sampling as the respondents of the study. A set of questionnaire was designed to gain primary data from the respondents on their motivations and attitudes towards the learning of English literature component. The overall findings of the study indicates that the students are highly instrumentally oriented and intrinsically motivated to learn the English literature component although they do possess some extent of integrative orientation as well as low level of extrinsic motivation. Apart from that, the findings also show that the students possess quite favourable attitudes towards learning the English literature component. They are willing to take necessary actions to ensure their success in learning literature as well as acquiring the language. In conclusion, some recommendations have been made to further increase students’ motivations and attitudes towards learning the English literature component and recommendations for future research have also been included in the final part of the report.
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In the era of information and technology, there is a great need for individuals to master the English language for communication purposes. Kitao (1996) states that English is used for different purposes such as news and information, business, diplomacy, entertainment and others. The English language has become a basic requirement for students and job seekers in this increasingly globalised world. In order to meet the needs for international communication, Malaysians need to be proficient in English.

In Malaysia, English is taught as a second language in schools. This shows that it is an essential language to be learnt as the mastery of English is not only viewed as a sign of one’s intellectual development but also as a means by which the student responds to his experiences through improved thinking and communication skills. This means 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).
A strong command of the English language is an essential pre-requisite for any school-leaver who wants to understand and absorb the massive corpus of knowledge available in reference books written in English at tertiary level or any graduate who wants to compete in career choice and advancement (Khairy Jamaluddin, 2008). Although the English language is learnt from primary and secondary school, the standard of English in our schools has been deteriorating (Pillay, 1998) and it has been found that many of the teachers are themselves not proficient in English (Yap, 2008; Pillay, 1998).

One of the main reasons that contribute to the lack of English language proficiency among students is their unwillingness to read especially in the English language (Rosli Talif, 1995). This is due to the fact that Malaysians lack interest in reading. In order to improve the interest in reading and enhance the English language ability among students, the Ministry of Education has taken the initiative to incorporate the literature component into the English language syllabus.

The literature component of the *Kurikulum Bersepadu Sekolah Menengah* (KBSM) syllabus for Form 1 to 5 aims to enable learners to engage in a wider reading of good works and for enjoyment and self-development. It is also aimed to develop an understanding of other societies, cultures, values and traditions that will contribute to their emotional and spiritual growth (Sukatan Pelajaran Bahasa Inggeris KBSM, 2000). Literary texts are chosen because it provides cultural, linguistic and educational values (Sage, 1987). It is hoped that apart from improving students’ mastery of the language, they will also be more culturally and socially adept.

Although the English literature component is beneficial to second language learning, the motivation and attitude that students have play vital roles in determining their success in second language learning. A number of research has been done to prove
assertion. Linguists such as Brown (2000), Gardner and Lambert (1972) and Chambers (1999) stated that positive attitude and high motivation will enhance English as second language (ESL) learners’ mastery of language in order for students to have greater willingness to learn the target language. Similarly, Elyıldırım and Ashton (2006) stated that students’ learning potential increases when attitudes are positive and motivation is high. Thus, it can be concluded that students’ ability to learn a second language can be influenced by their attitudes towards the target language, the target language speakers and their culture, the social value of learning the second language and also their students’ attitudes towards themselves as members of their own culture (Brown, 2000).

Based on researches conducted, it is clear that the level of motivation that students have shape their attitudes to become either positive or negative towards learning a second language. As literature is one of the best mediums to expose second language learners to a variety of language input using authentic materials, it is essential that teachers realize the level of motivations and attitudes of students towards learning it.

1.1 BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

The literature component is incorporated into the KBSM syllabus with the specific aim of producing more proficient English language learners. According to Chitravelu and Chuan (2005), English is used to acquire knowledge as students are able to gain access to an extensive amount of literature and information in all fields, to interact and cooperate effectively and to enjoy literature in order to fulfil the aims and objectives of the National Education Philosophy.
Literature with its aesthetic value is included in the English KBSM syllabus because it can assist students in learning the English language. It is seen as a body of knowledge which ought to be learnt for its own sake (O’Sullivan, 1991) and is the best avenue for students to be exposed to authentic English materials and a variety of language structures and vocabulary (Sage, 1987). Markwardt (1978) states that students who are reluctant to study literature will have limited exposure to English. According to Povey (1972), using literature in ESL classes is advantageous as literature will be able to increase all language skills because it extends linguistic knowledge by providing evidence of extensive and subtle vocabulary usage and complex and correct syntax. Apart from developing linguistic knowledge, McKay (1982) argues that students would be motivated to learn language through literature. It is hoped that through the incorporation of the English literature component into the syllabus, students will be able to improve their English language proficiency and at the same time develop and further increase their motivation towards learning English.

However, as many students are not interested in reading (Rosli Talif, 1995), the massive reading that they have to do in learning the English literature component poses as a burden to them. As a consequence, the effort to produce proficient English language users through literature is somewhat hampered. Furthermore, many students especially in the rural areas and students who enter the tertiary settings are unable to use English effectively in their academic and extra-curricular activities (Pillay, 1998). This hinders their chances of getting good grades and obtaining good jobs (Pillay, 1998). Nevertheless, motivations and attitudes that the students have are the key elements to successful English language learning. No matter what their stands are towards literature learning, the motivations and attitudes that they possess will determine their effort and accomplishment in mastering the English language.

The lack of interest and motivation among students to learn literature is largely due to their low level of proficiency. The language barrier that exists between students
and texts often poses as a threat as it creates difficulties for students. There has been a
general pre-supposition that to study literature, one requires knowledge of the intricacies
of language and inherently interpretative ability to derive the writer’s message
(O’Sullivan, 1991). Thus, students might be reluctant and demotivated to learn literature
because of the linguistic complexities, length of texts, cultural and social discrepancies
as well as differing themes.

The linguistic complexity is the first obstacle that students face when learning
literature. Not only that the basic structures of the English language difficult, the terms
used to describe literary texts such as metaphor, hyperbole, iambic pentameter,
foregrounding, and irony prove to be a burden for students. The length of fictional
narrative texts is another hurdle as students might not be interested to read long stories
when they are not motivated to learn English at all (Hill, 1986). Apart from that, the
literariness of literature also serves as a problem to the students as it is viewed as not
providing the conventional and appropriate kind of language required to convey
practical, everyday messages (O’Sullivan, 1991).

The cultural and social discrepancies that exist between learners and the texts
also create a gap in their background knowledge which hinders them from
comprehending the texts fully (Hill, 1986). Although imagination and creative thinking
play important roles, the different interpretations of the students make it difficult to
achieve the objectives of learning literature. Furthermore, the differing themes and ways
of thinking between the students and foreign writers might be too much for the students
to deal with. Themes such as murder, undying love, and racism provide exposure to
students to other cultures but at the same time hinder them from getting the message that
the writers are trying to convey effectively.
As some of the teachers have questionable proficiency level to teach English (Pillay, 1998), they tend to rely heavily on intuition when it comes to the teaching of literature as the methods of teaching literature are still in their formative years. The methods are not clearly spelt out as the ones in teaching English as a second or foreign language. Hence, teachers still do not have a clear idea on how to approach the teaching of literature interactively to motivate and build positive attitude in students.

Many researchers such as Gardner and Lambert (1972) and Chambers (1999) had found that motivation and attitude of the learners determine the success of second language learning. According to Chitravelu and Chuan (1995), motivation is an essential element to create a conducive condition for learning a language. It is an extremely important factor in successful language acquisition. Students who are highly motivated achieve greater success than those who are not motivated. It is thus desirable to maximize motivation among students. This is because motivation to learn a second language is seen as the extent to which the individual works or strives to learn the language because of the desire to do so and the satisfaction experienced from this activity (Gardner and Lambert, 1972). Therefore, it is essential that teachers inculcate high motivation and positive attitude in students towards learning a second language.

A study conducted by Liu (2007) to third year Chinese university students revealed that motivation and attitude relate closely to second language learning. The findings of this study show that the students have positive attitudes and were more instrumentally than integratively motivated to learn English. The students felt that the English language was important for a brighter future, to search for information and materials on the internet, to be more knowledgeable and to know what was happening in the world. However, they were not interested in English art and literature and the life of English-speaking nations and people. Furthermore, they only had little contact with native speakers of the target language in their daily life despite living in a harbour tourism city (Liu, 2007).
Another study conducted by Moiinvaziri (2007) investigated motivational orientation in English language learning among 255 Iranian undergraduates. This study concluded that Iranian university students were both instrumentally and integratively oriented to learn the English language. As they were integratively oriented, the students learnt the English language with a genuine interest to assimilate with the target language, culture, community, their way of life, literature and so forth. Meanwhile, as they were also instrumentally oriented, they learnt the English language for utilitarian reasons such as to graduate, to further their education, to obtain high ranking job and to receive people’s respect (Moiinvaziri, 2007).

Hence, it is clear that motivation and attitude complement each other in language learning (Gardner and Lambert, 1972). Many Malaysian students seem to have a negative attitude and different perceptions towards the English language. Students, especially in rural schools cannot see the immediate purpose of learning English. As a result, they are not serious about learning the language and tend to learn the subject just because it is compulsory. Consequently, they now struggled to cope with English literature in schools, hence wondering the importance of literature to them. In their view, literature is merely texts that they have to learn in order to pass the examinations. They also view literature to be more of a luxury for leisure times than providing any practical value in assisting English language learning. All these negative connotations associated with literature make students have pessimistic views on learning literature. This attitude that students have turns them into passive learners in the classroom which hinders them from being successful English language learners (Brown, 2000).

As literature is one of the best mediums to expose learners to a variety of second language input (Povey, 1987), it is important that students have high motivation and positive attitude towards learning it. The attitude and motivation that students bring with them into the classrooms determine the effectiveness and the success of the literature lessons as well as their mastery of the second language. Thus, this study will look into
the students’ perceptions of their motivations and attitudes towards learning the English literature component.

1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Literature has a lot to offer ESL and EFL learners. According to Hill (1986), the study of literature begins in delight and ends in wisdom. The psychological and linguistic reasons for teaching literature are: (1) the possibility of internalizing the language and reinforcing points previously learned, (2) a genuine language context and a focal point for the students in their own effort to communicate, (3) the motivation and (4) an introduction to the many different varieties and a range of texts of English (Hill, 1986). Due to these reasons, the Ministry of Education has included the literature component in the English language syllabus.

In second language learning, it is important that students have 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). Higher levels of motivation and positive attitude will produce more successful second language learners 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 further 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.

Nonetheless, many students are not motivated in reading (Rosli Talif, 1995), hence, to them literature is burdening. As a result, they felt that they are forced to learn
the subject and so, they learn the subject just to pass the examination (Pillay, 1998). Many students especially in the rural areas are facing difficulties in learning literature due to the language and cultural barrier (Hill, 1986). Due to their inability to comprehend the texts, they are not able to proceed to more cognitively challenging activities. They become passive listeners as they expect teachers to be the active provider of input during the learning process. Consequently, this leads them to frustration and building of negative attitude towards literature, while the process of learning itself will be demotivating (Hill, 1986).

As motivation and attitude that students have determine the success of second language learning, it is essential that their motivation are taken into consideration to ensure the effectiveness of literature lessons. This is because their motivation shapes their attitudes towards learning literature (Gardner and Lambert, 1972).

At present, the issue is whether students are interested in learning English literature. The questions that have always been pondered upon are how much literature and reading texts should be included into the curriculum as well as the cultural and linguistic barriers that must be overcome to facilitate a successful second language learning environment. While other studies had been conducted to find out students’ motivation and attitude towards second language learning, this study looked into students’ perceptions of their motivation and attitude towards learning the English literature component of the KBSM syllabus in schools.
1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of this study are:

1. To find out students’ perceptions towards the learning of the literature component in the English language syllabus.

2. To find out students’ motivations towards the learning of the literature component in the English language syllabus.

3. To examine students’ attitudes towards the learning of the literature component in the English language syllabus.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The study aims to answer the following questions:

1. What are the students’ perceptions towards the learning of the literature component in the English language syllabus?

2. What are the students’ motivations towards the learning of the literature component in the English language syllabus?

3. What are the students’ attitudes towards the learning of the literature component in the English language syllabus?
1.5 SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

High motivation and positive attitude that ESL students have contribute to their success in learning a second language. As literature is a rich linguistic material, it is beneficial to be used as a resource of comprehensible input in the language classrooms.

Thus, the findings of this study provide insights for English teachers who are teaching the literature component to reflect on whether the approaches that they are implementing in their classrooms are effective and beneficial to their students. Apart from that, teachers will be able to understand their students’ perceptions, motivations and attitudes towards learning literature. By knowing these, teachers will be able to select a more appropriate method or technique to teach literature in order to make it interesting and fun for the students.

Furthermore, the findings of this study provide information for curriculum developers as to whether the reading materials of the literature component in the syllabus are motivating for the students and whether it caters to the students’ needs, and interests. With this information, better selection of components for the English literature such as poems, short stories and novels could be done to make the students avid readers of the English literature.

Thus, it is hoped that through the findings of this study, teachers are able to cater to the students’ needs and interests in learning the English literature component so as to improve on their motivation and shape their attitude positively as these will effect their success in second language learning.
1.6 LIMITATION OF THE STUDY

This study, as in other studies is not without its limitation. This study was conducted in an urban school where the students possess average and high mastery of the English language. Therefore, the findings of this study cannot be conclusively generalized to a larger population and is only applicable to this context of study.

1.7 SCOPE OF THE STUDY

This study focuses on students’ perceptions of their motivation and attitude towards the learning of English literature component. It was conducted in a cluster school in an urban area.
1.8 DEFINITION OF TERMS

Throughout this study, some important terms are used repeatedly and definitions of these terms help to give general understanding on the overall purpose of this study. These definitions are specific for this study only and should not be generalized to other studies in different context.

**Attitudes:**

An evaluative reaction to some referent or attitude object, inferred on the basis of the individual’s beliefs or opinions about the referent (Gardner, 1985; cited in Chambers, 1999). Attitude is the set of values which a pupil brings to the foreign language learning experience. It is shaped by the pay-offs that she expects; the advantages that she sees in language learning. The values which a pupil has may be determined by different variables, such as experience of learning the target language, of the target language community, experience of travel, the influence of parents and friends and the attitudes which they may demonstrate and articulate (Chambers, 1999). Attitudes are also compared to personality characteristics where it can be part of personality as it is a characteristic that vary between individuals. In other words, attitudes refer specifically to the states of emotions and thought relating to the English language, to the learning of English and to the culture of English speaking people.
**Literature:**
Any text, “verbal and/ or visual, that offers the possibility for aesthetic reading or viewing and listening (Boomer, 1985; cited in Rosli Talif, 1995).

**Literature in ESL:**
In the context of ESL, it is more appropriate to exploit literature as a resource rather than as an object of study. Apart from personal development and growth and other literary aims, the use of literature in ESL instruction is to foster a greater interest and involvement and also a more meaningful outcome in language learning activities and exercises. Therefore, depending upon the proficiency level of the students, complete literary works in English, translations, and adaptations or simplified versions of the classics could be considered for this purpose (Rosli Talif, 1995)

**Motivation:**
Motivation means that organism behaves the way it does 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 Shaaban, 2002).

In other words, motivation means the forces that account for the arousal, selection, direction and continuation of behaviour. In terms of second language learning, it is the emotions and needs which constitute the source of the drive to expend effort to learn a second or foreign language.