

The Relationship among Attitudes, Motivation and Learning Achievement in English as a Second Language a Study on Advanced Level Students

¹S. Pratheesha, ²T. Vijayanka

¹Department of Language Studies

²Department of English, Sri Lanka Institute of Advanced Technological Education

DOI: <https://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2025.9010356>

Received: 16 January 2025; Accepted: 20 January 2025; Published: 22 February 2025

ABSTRACT

In Sri Lankan education system, English is a compulsory subject from Grade 3 to Grade 13, leaving no option for alternatives. Despite more than a decade of English instruction, students often exhibit challenges in language proficiency. Attitudes and motivation are recognized as significant factors influencing language acquisition. This research aims to investigate the correlation between students' attitudes, their motivational levels, and their achievement in learning English as a second language among Advanced Level students. The study seeks to provide insights into how these variables interact and impact English language learning outcomes. Three schools from urban, suburban, and rural areas within the Batticaloa District were randomly selected for this study. The research employed both quantitative and qualitative correlation analyses. A total of 116 respondents, comprising both male and female students, were surveyed and interviewed randomly to collect the necessary data. Data collection involved distributing a standardized questionnaire consisting of 18 items specifically designed to address the study's objectives. The data were analyzed using SPSS Statistics 20 software. The study's findings indicate a significant correlation between students' attitudes, motivation, and their achievement in learning English. The results suggest that positive attitudes towards English are associated with higher levels of motivation and, consequently, better learning outcomes. Conversely, negative attitudes towards the language are linked to lower motivation and reduced achievement. The research highlights a significant relationship among motivation, attitudes, and learning achievement. Based on these findings, the study recommends the implementation of pedagogical strategies to maintain and enhance students' positive attitudes, increase motivation, and improve English language learning skills.

Keywords: attitudes, English language learning, learning achievement, motivation, second language

INTRODUCTION

English has become a mandatory language in Sri Lanka, where students are required to learn it as their second language for a significant portion of their schooling. In government schools, English is a mandatory subject, ensuring that all students have the opportunity to acquire proficiency in the language. The importance of English language education has been increasingly recognized across various sectors, including education, technology, healthcare, and transportation. The part that motivational and attitude elements play in second or foreign language (L2) learning has long been a source of concern for L2 researchers. These elements are deeply ingrained in the students' thoughts. Teachers and scholars agree that the most important variables affecting the success and rate of learning a second or foreign language is motivation and attitude. It implies that learners who approach language acquisition with positivity are more likely to achieve satisfactory language proficiency. The motivation of learners to acquire a language is significantly influenced by their attitude towards it.

Sri Lankan culture is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon that is constantly evolving.

It is a product of the country's rich history, diverse population, and unique geographical location. Understanding Sri Lankan culture is essential for anyone who wishes to interact with the people of Sri Lanka

and appreciate the richness and diversity of this island nation. This study examines the attitudes and motivation of advanced English language learners from diverse geographical regions in Sri Lanka, including urban, suburban, and rural areas. By focusing on two schools in each region, the researcher can investigate how learners' backgrounds and environments influence their language learning experiences and outcomes. The purpose of this study was to analyze the significant correlation between the students' attitudes, motivation and learning achievement. In this study external factors like socio economic status, teacher quality and parental involvement are considered extraneous variables which may impact learning outcomes.

Research Question:

1. At what levels the attitudes of the students being affected?
2. At wat levels the motivation of the students is being affected?
3. How the attitudes and motivation affect the learning achievement of the advanced level students?

Objectives

This study aims to identify the factors that motivate students to learn English, assess students' attitudes towards English language learning, and explore the relationship between English language learning outcomes and their attitudinal and motivational factors.

LITERATURE SURVEY

Gardner (1985) defines second language (L2) motivation as an individual's intrinsic drive to learn a language due to personal desire and the satisfaction derived from the learning process. He further elaborates that motivation encompasses three key components: motivational intensity, the desire to learn the language, and one's attitude towards the language learning experience. Ho's (2008) research supported Gardner's (1985) assertion by investigating the connection between students' interest in cultural studies and their motivation and attitudes towards English language learning. Ho discovered a strong correlation between these factors, finding that students who enjoyed learning about English-speaking countries exhibited more positive attitudes and higher motivation to study English.

In contrast to Gardner's perspective, Svansen (2009) identified a negative relationship between English language proficiency and attitudes towards the target language culture. According to Svansen, as learners' language skills improve, they may become more critical of the culture associated with that language.

Bidin's (2009) research examined the relationship between students' attitudes towards English language learning and their academic performance at the University of Teknologi Mara (UiTM) in Malaysia. His findings revealed that a significant number of students at UiTM lacked interest in learning English. Furthermore, the study demonstrated a strong correlation between students' attitudes towards English and their overall language learning outcomes.

Nissen and Strukelj's (2007) research investigated the relationship between students' attitudes towards English language learning and their academic performance. While the study found that students generally had positive attitudes towards English, there was no significant correlation between these attitudes and their learning outcomes. The researchers attributed these findings to the students' perceived proficiency in English. Despite varying levels of positive and negative attitudes, the students' attitudes did not appear to influence their academic success in English. This suggests that high scores in English are not solely determined by positive attitudes, nor are they hindered by negative ones.

Brown (2000) makes the point that both integrative and instrumental motivations are not necessarily mutually exclusive. When learning a second language, learners typically combine both motivational styles rather than choosing just one. He uses the example of foreign students living in the US who want to integrate with the locals and culture while also learning English for academic objectives. An essential component of L2 proficiency is motivation. Because of this, it's critical to determine the kind and combination of motivation that

support successful second language learning. At the same time, motivation must be seen as one of several variables in a complex model of interconnected situational and individual elements that are specific to each language learner.

Getie, A.S. (2020) the study's conclusions mostly demonstrated that grade 10 pupils have good attitudes regarding learning English as a foreign language. Peer groups, parents, and English native speakers are examples of social elements that have a favorable impact on students' attitudes. However, elements of the educational context, such as English language instructors and the physical learning environment, classroom layout, and seat arrangements, had a detrimental effect on students' attitudes. Nonetheless, the results demonstrated that target language learners have favorable opinions about the other educational context element, which is the grade 10 English textbook. This indicates that the study's setting for teaching English as a foreign language has a beneficial impact on students' opinions. The language acquisition process can be aided by reducing the psychological variables (i.e., emotional filters) for the target language learners. According to the study's conclusions, the physical learning environment should be enhanced, and the government should collaborate with educators, school administrators, and communities to accomplish this.

METHODOLOGY

A descriptive quantitative research design was employed to investigate the relationship between attitudes, motivation, and learning outcomes in English language learning. Two schools from different regions were selected for this study. Prior to conducting the research, permission was obtained from the respective zonal educational officers to visit the schools. The approved permission letters were then presented to the school principals, who facilitated the process of contacting advanced level students.

The study will use a quantitative approach, with data collected from a sample of children from different backgrounds. The study's findings will help to shed light on the impact of the variables in their learning achievement. The findings of this study may inform the development of interventions designed to enhance English language learning among children.

We were able to get in touch with the class teachers through the Principal of the school. With that, the children and the irrespective subject teachers were informed earlier about the objective and process of this survey. There are a total of 116 students aged 17, of which 23 are male and 93 are female. Questionnaire were administered to children to answer individually on their own under the guidance of their teachers and the research team. The questionnaire comprises 20 questions categorized based on the attitudes, motivation and learning achievement. All the questions were scaled with 0 to 5 points. The individual details such as gender and age were also obtained. Finally, 117 questionnaires were collected from children, response rate 94.44%.

Regarding the methods, a stratified sampling method of data collection has been employed since the aim of the research was to examine.

Qualitative interviews and focus group discussions with the subject teachers were also used to explore how the factors affect the learning of English as a second language. The qualitative data was sorted into topics and examined as a result.

DISCUSSION

Attitudes of Advanced Level Students in Learning English as a Second Language

Attitudes of the students	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean
a. I am interested in learning English Language	0%	3.44%	17.24%	47.41%	31.03%	4.07
b. I believe I can improve my language skills over time	0.86%	2.58%	25%	43.10%	27.58%	3.93

c. I feel confident in using English language in and out of the class	4.31%	11.20%	43.96%	32.75%	6.89%	3.25
d. I feel English is important for my personal or professional goals	0.86%	5.17%	13.79%	35.34%	43.96%	4.31
e. I would prefer to learn the language either in a formal classroom setting or through immersion	12.06%	17.24%	24.13%	31.89%	13.79%	3.15
f. I have some beliefs or stereotypes that associate with English language like status symbol and societal class	4.31%	12.93%	38.79%	29.31%	13.79%	3.36

A survey of targeted students revealed a strong interest in learning English as a second language. Nearly 70% of respondents expressed confidence in their ability to improve their language skills over time. Moreover, half of the students felt adequately prepared to use English both inside and outside the classroom. The importance of English for personal and professional goals was widely acknowledged, with a strong majority of students affirming its significance. In terms of preferred learning environments, nearly 44% of respondents favored either formal classroom instruction or immersion experiences. However, a notable 17% of students exhibited some preconceived notions or stereotypes about English, associating it with status symbols or societal class.

Motivation of Advanced Level Students in Learning English as a Second Language

Motivation of the students	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean
a. I have people at home who encourages my language learning	12.06%	14.65%	29.31%	31.03%	12.06%	3.15
b. I have access to language resources (books, videos, etc) at home	8.62%	21.55%	35.34%	24.13%	9.48%	3.07
c. I like to learn English and want to become like a native speaker of English	10.34%	12.06%	29.31%	25.86%	21.55%	3.36
d. I enjoy participating in language related activities outside the classroom	16.37%	13.79%	21.55%	36.20%	11.20%	3.12
e. I am naturally curious to learn the language	2.58%	4.31%	27.58%	38.79%	25.86%	3.79
f. Personally, language learning is Important to me	2.58%	0%	5.17%	37.93%	53.44%	4.41

Several key findings emerge regarding the motivation of the advanced level of students learning English as their second language. The findings indicate strong support for English language learning within the targeted student population. A significant majority reported having home-based encouragement for their language studies. However, nearly 30% of students expressed a lack of access to essential language resources, such as books or audio clips, for independent learning. Despite this challenge, nearly half of the students demonstrated a keen desire to learn English and aspired to achieve native-speaker proficiency. Over 60% of the sample actively participated in language-related activities outside the classroom. While the overall enthusiasm for English language learning was evident, a small minority (2.5%) did not perceive it as personally important.

Learning Achievement of Advanced Level Students in Learning English as a Second Language

Learning Achievement of the students	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Uncertain	Agree	Strongly agree	Mean
a. I can communicate in English confidently	6.03%	18.96%	43.10%	23.27%	7.75%	3.07

b. I can able to write using appropriate vocabulary and correct sentence structure	25%	24.13%	32.75%	16.37%	0.86%	2.43
c. If I listen to any podcasts or audio clips, I can easily understand what they refer to	8.62%	11.20%	44.82%	24.13%	10.34%	3.15
d. I can read a passage and answer the questions correctly	6.89%	14.65%	50%	21.55%	6.03%	3.03
e. I'm familiar with different patterns of sentence structure and grammar	18.96%	29.31%	33.62%	12.93%	4.31%	2.51
g. I have enough confident to communicate in English either verbally or non- verbally	7.75%	25%	45.68%	17.24%	3.44%	2.81

The above findings show about the learning achievement of Advanced Level Students in Learning English as a Second Language. Only 30% of students felt confident in their ability to communicate effectively in English. Furthermore, 50% struggled with writing using appropriate vocabulary and correct sentence structure. While 34% of students demonstrated proficiency in understanding podcasts or audio clips, 44% expressed uncertainty about their listening skills. Similarly, 50% of students were unsure of their reading comprehension abilities, despite 27% reporting success in reading passages and answering questions accurately. A significant weakness identified was familiarity with sentence structure and grammar patterns, with nearly 47% of students lacking sufficient knowledge. Additionally, 46% of students lacked confidence in both verbal and nonverbal communication.

The Examination Outcomes of Advanced Level Students in the Ordinary Level Exam

	A	B	C	S	W
Rural	0	0	0	17	24
Sub urban	0	4	9	14	7
Urban	2	12	14	13	0

An analysis of the Ordinary Level examination results for advanced level students reveals significant disparities across regions. While rural schools achieved no As, Bs, or Cs, suburban schools recorded a higher level of success with 4 Bs, 9 Cs, 14 Ss, and 7 weak passes. Urban schools demonstrated the strongest performance, securing A grades and achieving no weak passes. These results highlight the uneven distribution of educational resources and opportunities in the country.

The Last Term Examination Scores of Advanced Level Students in the English subject

	Less than 50	50 - 60	60 - 70	70 - 80	80 - 100
Rural	41				
Sub urban	29	2	2		1
Urban	12	21	7		1

An analysis of the final term English examination results for advanced level students reveals significant regional disparities. Rural students demonstrated the lowest performance, with all scoring below 50. Suburban students achieved more favorable results, with 29 scoring below 50, 4 between 50 and 70, and 1 above 80. Urban students outperformed both rural and suburban counterparts, with fewer students scoring below 50. Additionally, 21 achieved scores between 50 and 60, 7 between 60 and 70, and 1 between 80 and 100.

Correlations

		LA	Attitude	Motivation
LA	Pearson Correlation	1	.558**	.687**

	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000
	N	116	116	116
Attitude	Pearson Correlation	.558**	1	.578**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000
	N	116	116	116
Motivation	Pearson Correlation	.687**	.578**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	
	N	116	116	116
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).				

This study delves into the relationship between Attitude, Motivation, and Learning Achievement among students learning English. The aim is to understand how students' Attitude and Motivation influence their academic performance and determine which factor has a greater impact on learning success. By using Pearson's correlation coefficient, the research explores the strength and significance of these relationships among 116 students, providing valuable insights into the dynamics of learning.

Relationship between Attitude and Learning Achievement

The correlation analysis reveals a moderate positive correlation ($r = 0.558$) between Attitude and Learning Achievement. This suggests that students who maintain a more positive attitude toward learning English tend to perform better academically. Attitude encompasses students' feelings, beliefs, and perceptions toward the learning process. When students approach English learning with enthusiasm, optimism, or curiosity, they are more likely to engage in learning activities, put in effort, and overcome challenges. The statistically significant p-value of 0.000 indicates that the observed relationship is unlikely to have occurred by chance.

This finding suggests that educators need to focus on creating a positive learning environment where students feel supported and encouraged. Teachers can foster a positive attitude by offering constructive feedback, providing relevant and engaging materials, and celebrating students' successes. These actions can motivate students to persist in their learning efforts and, as a result, improve their academic achievement.

Relationship between Motivation and Learning Achievement

The most striking finding is the strong positive correlation ($r = 0.687$) between Motivation and Learning Achievement. This implies that Motivation plays a critical role in driving students' performance in learning English. Motivation refers to the internal and external forces that push students toward achieving their goals. When students are highly motivated—either because they enjoy the subject (intrinsic motivation) or because they see value in achieving good grades, future opportunities, or rewards (extrinsic motivation)—they tend to put more effort into learning and are more likely to succeed.

The p-value of 0.000 again confirms that this relationship is statistically significant, demonstrating that Motivation is one of the most crucial predictors of academic success in language learning. The strong correlation suggests that increasing motivation levels will likely have a significant impact on students' performance. For educators, this highlights the importance of understanding the different types of motivation that influence students and implementing strategies to nurture both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation can be fostered by making learning enjoyable and meaningful, while extrinsic motivation can be encouraged through incentives such as rewards, recognition, and academic goals.

Relationship between Attitude and Motivation

The study also found a moderate positive correlation ($r = 0.578$) between Attitude and Motivation. This means that students with a positive attitude toward learning English are also more likely to be motivated to achieve higher performance. The p-value of 0.000 shows that this relationship is significant, indicating a connection between how students feel about learning and their motivation to succeed.

This finding suggests a reciprocal relationship: as students' attitudes become more positive, their motivation to learn also increases, and vice versa. This mutual reinforcement between attitude and motivation is key to understanding how to improve learning outcomes. When students see progress, gain confidence, or receive encouragement, their attitude toward the subject improves, leading to greater motivation. Teachers and educational institutions should thus focus on both emotional and motivational aspects to create a conducive learning environment where students are inspired and supported.

Regression Analysis and Variance Explained

The regression analysis further supports these findings by indicating that Attitude and Motivation together explain 47.4% of the variance in Learning Achievement ($R^2 = 0.474$). This means that nearly half of the differences in student performance can be attributed to the combination of these two factors. The Adjusted R^2 of 0.465 confirms that 46.5% of the variance remains explained even when accounting for the number of predictors. This suggests that while Attitude and Motivation are significant contributors to learning success, other factors (which are not measured in this study) account for the remaining 52.6% of the variance in performance.

The standard error of the estimate (0.55222) indicates the typical deviation of actual student performance from the model's predictions. A lower standard error means the model's predictions are more accurate. In this case, the moderate standard error suggests that the model reasonably explains Learning Achievement, but there is still room for improvement.

Implications for Educational Practice

The findings from this research provide several important implications for educators, administrators, and policymakers. Motivation emerges as the most powerful predictor of learning achievement, indicating that efforts to enhance motivation will yield significant improvements in student performance. Teachers can enhance motivation by setting clear learning goals, offering encouragement, and helping students connect English learning to their personal and professional aspirations.

While Motivation is the most influential factor, Attitude also plays a critical role in learning achievement. A positive attitude can amplify motivation, leading to better learning outcomes. Schools should foster a positive learning environment where students feel confident, supported, and engaged. This can be achieved by offering diverse learning experiences, using positive reinforcement, and ensuring that students feel emotionally and intellectually connected to the subject matter.

Furthermore, the relationship between Attitude and Motivation suggests that improvements in one area will likely lead to improvements in the other. Therefore, an integrated approach that focuses on enhancing both Attitude and Motivation is essential for optimizing learning achievement in English.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this research highlights the significant roles that attitude and motivation play in determining students' learning achievement in English. Motivation has the strongest influence, suggesting that highly motivated students are much more likely to succeed. Attitude also plays a key role, as a positive outlook on learning can boost motivation and, in turn, improve performance. Educators should adopt strategies that enhance both students' attitudes and motivation to maximize their learning outcomes, ensuring that students not only achieve academic success but also find personal value and satisfaction in learning English.

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