

Attitudes and motivation of undergraduates towards learning English as a Second Language

Wasana Maheshwarie Pushpananda
English Language Teaching Unit, University of Ruhuna, Wellamadama, Matara
Wasana.pushpananda@gmail.com

Motivation, the driving force of many human actions, plays a crucial role in the language learning process of a person. Motivation is one factor which steers an individual towards fluency in a language. There can be different motivational types which influence a person to learn and use a language which is other than his or her mother tongue. The attitudes of a person direct him or her to have a certain behavior. As in any other aspect of human life, language learning is also greatly affected by a person's attitudes towards the language and the community which uses that particular language. Therefore both the attitudes and the motivation of a person play an important role in the language learning process of a person, especially in the case of learning a foreign or a second language. Considering the specific context in which language learning is taking place a particular type of environment (i.e. the language learning environment) is created which greatly influence the attitudes and motivation of language learners. This study focuses on attitudes and motivation towards learning the English language among undergraduates of a Sri Lankan university. The aim of the study was to find out the level of motivation of these undergraduates towards learning the English language, the type of motivation which prevails among them and their attitudes towards learning English in general and within the university in particular. These undergraduates are from the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences of the University of Ruhuna. A randomly selected sample of 110 students participated in this study which used a mixed methods approach to gather data. A questionnaire and an interview were administered in order to gather data from the participants. Both quantitative and qualitative data were used in this study. The results revealed that the undergraduates who participated in the study were motivated to learn the English language to a substantial level. Determining the motivation type of these students was a complex procedure as they display different interests and necessities. It was evident that the students are both integratively and instrumentally motivated to learn the English language. The undergraduate participants of the study had positive attitudes towards learning English in general. However, they held negative attitudes towards learning English within the university.

Keywords: English, Second language, Attitudes and motivation, Learning environment, Undergraduates