

Attitude, Motivation, and Learning Behaviour of English Learning of Junior High School, Muslim Thai Students of a School in Bangkok

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Abstract

Recent research on attitudes, motivation and learning behaviour of Thai students seem to concentrate on samples at different educational levels, for example, high school, vocational or higher education. There have hardly been any research projects focused on Muslim Thai junior high school students in Bangkok. In contrast to the mainstream investigations, the purpose of this research paper is to explore attitude, motivation and learning behavior of junior high school, Muslim Thai students of a school in Nongchok District, Bangkok. The school is of particular interest as most of the teachers and

students were Muslim. Data were collected by using questionnaires with a sample of 164 students of both genders.

Research results showed that the overall attitude towards English learning was at a very high level ($M = 4.22$). The highest mean scores were found in the items asking students' opinions about English as an international language they should learn ($M = 4.25$) and English as a tool to help them travel internationally ($M = 4.35$). Regarding motivation, their overall score was at a high level ($M = 3.56$). With reference to learning behaviour, the overall score was just average ($M = 2.99$).

In conclusion, although samples had a high attitude and motivation towards English, their learning behaviour is not up to expectations.

Keywords: English learning; attitude; motivation; language learning behavior; Bangkok Muslim Thai students.

1. Background of the study

Attitude, motivation and learning behaviour of English of Thai students have become a topic of interest in recent years. Samples of research projects which have been done on these areas are students of different levels, from both public and private schools, colleges and universities, in several parts of the country (e.g. Kitjaroonchai 2012a, 2012b, 2014; Degang 2010; Vibulphol 2016; Choosri and Intharaksa 2011; Oranpattanachai 2013; Cho and Teo 2014). As far as samples are concerned, the research project by Cho and Teo (2014) is quite unique, deviating from the mainstream investigation as samples involved in the study were high school students in three southernmost provinces of Thailand, where the majority of population are Muslim. Study of attitude, motivation and learning behaviour of English of Muslim Thai students in Bangkok, capital of Thailand, does not seem to have been attempted. That leads to the present study, that is to analyze attitude, motivation and learning behaviour of Muslim Thai junior high school students in a school in Bangkok. This research article is based on Sarawat's study (2020).

2. Purpose of the Present Study

The main purpose of this paper is to analyze attitude, motivation and learning behaviour of Muslim Thai students of junior high school at a school in Bangkok.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study used a descriptive method of research with an aim to find out the attitude, motivation and English language behaviour of Muslim Thai students in Bangkok.

3.2 Data and data collection instrument

The samples in this study consisted of 164 junior high school (form 8) students of Nongchokpittayanussornmattayom School, Nongchok District, Bangkok. They were sampled out of 280 students by convenience or accidental sampling. Questionnaires were used to collect data from the samples. The questionnaires were designed to elicit data on samples' attitude, motivation and English language learning behaviour. Questionnaires were administered and collected in November 2020, during the second semester of school year 2020. As regards the school, it is a private, Muslim-based high school, established more than one hundred years ago. The majority of teachers and students are Muslim. In addition to normal classes, Muslim students attend their religious classes and activities.

4. Findings

Results of data analysis are presented in this section.

4.1 Attitude towards English

Samples have a very high level of attitude towards English, as can be seen from Table 1 below.

Table 1 Samples' attitude toward English

No.	Statement	Mean	S.D.	Level of agreement
1	English provides opportunity for educational and career. Advancement	4.17	1.05	Agree
2	English helps facilitate international travel.	4.35	1.01	Strongly Agree
3	English is an international language that we should learn.	4.25	0.95	Strongly Agree
4	Learning English requires time and patience.	4.10	0.95	Agree
Total		4.22	0.80	Strongly Agree

Data in Table 1 shows that, overall, samples had a very high attitude of the language. They strongly agree that English is an international language that they should learn, and that it facilitates their international traveling. At the same time, they agreed that English helps their educational and career advancement, and that learning English needs time and patience.

4. 2 Motivation

While samples showed a very high level of attitude towards English, their motivation to learn English is only high. Table 2 below illustrates details of their motivation.

Table 2 Samples' motivation towards learning English

No.	Statement	Mean	S.D.	Level of agreement
1	Learning English helps us understand native speakers' way of life.	3.60	1.12	Agree
2	Learning English helps us accept foreigners' different opinions.	3.67	1.09	Agree
3	I enjoy reading English books, newspapers and magazines.	2.85	1.24	Neutral
4	English is important for work in the future.	4.13	1.01	Agree
Total		3.56	0.84	Agree

When asked about their motivation to learn English, the overall response as well as most of the items was Agree. Item 3 received only 2.85 or Neutral. To summarize, samples' attitude attained the highest mean score, followed by high mean score of their motivation.

4.3 Samples' learning behaviour

Details of samples' learning behaviour are shown in the following Table 3.

Table 3 Samples' learning behavior

No	Statement	Mean	S.D.	Level of agreement
1	I pay attention when learning English speaking.	3.35	1.04	Neutral
2	I like to practice speaking English with foreign teachers.	2.54	1.25	Disagree
3	I will find out more about words or expressions that I do not know.	2.98	1.05	Agree
4	I will try to ask my teachers if I do not understand.	3.08	1.14	Neutral
Total		2.99	0.92	Neutral

Samples' overall score for their learning behaviour of English is only 2.99 or Neutral and this score applies to most items. Of particular interest is item two (2) where they were asked whether they liked to talk to their foreign teachers as a way to practice their English and the response was Disagree (2.54). At this point, it could be safely be concluded that although samples had a very high regard for English (Table 1), their learning style did not reflect their positive attitude.

To sum up, the mean score gradually decreases from attitude towards English, to learning behaviour of English. The samples strongly agree that English is a useful language for many reasons including their work in the future but the mean score of their language learning behaviour reflects the fact that they would attempt moderately in this subject.

5. Conclusions, Discussion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusions

Data analysis has pointed out that the samples, who were junior high school, Muslim Thai students of a school in Bangkok, have a highest attitude towards English in several respects, for example, it is an international language that can help them when they work or travel in the future. The samples were found to have a high level of motivation towards English learning. For instance, English learning helped them understand native English speakers' ways of life. When taking their learning behaviour of English into consideration, however, there was a contradiction. The mean score for their learning behaviour dropped down to just average. In sum, the mean scores gradually decreased from very high level for motivation, to high level for motivation, and finally to average for language learning behaviour.

5.2 Discussion

As having mentioned earlier, the score for samples' language learning behaviour of English is just average, which deviates from the high mean scores of their attitude and motivation towards English. One reason behind this contradiction may come from the fact that the countries they have in mind for their higher level of education are not those where English is the dominant language. They follow their predecessors' tradition and culture. That is, their target countries are those in the Middle East, where they can study according to their religion and beliefs and most importantly, the dominant language spoken there is Arabic. Hence, English is not their foreign target language that they would like to seriously study.

5.3 Recommendations

The present study may be the first attempt to analyze attitude, motivation and English learning behaviour of high school, Muslim Thai students in Bangkok. It has some limitations and still a wide range of topics or questions are open for investigation.

Further research can be done and some are recommended here. For example, to what extent do social factors like gender, grades of English subjects or their time spent on English learning have on their attitude, motivation and learning behaviour of English.

Another topic that may warrant further study is to analyze data collected from similar samples in other schools in Bangkok and its neighboring provinces, to see whether it will yield the same result. As far as teaching of English is concerned, there should be a more in depth analysis of why the scores of most items on language learning behaviour are just average. Of particular interest is why samples' score for the item 'I like to practice speaking English with foreign teachers' is below average. What are the factors affecting this behaviour? Is it because of the teaching techniques, the teachers, teaching materials, or combination of some of these? Results from these studies are of value, which can help improve teaching and learning of English at schools.

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