

# **FACTORS INFLUENCING ATTITUDE TO ENGLISH AT COLLEGE LEVEL**

**Mantji Adelaide Nhlane**

**B.A., U.E.D., B.Ed.**

*Mini-dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree  
Magister Artium in English of the Potchefstroomse Universiteit vir Christelike Hoër  
Onderwys.*

**Supervisor: Prof. J.L. van der Walt**

**Assistant supervisor: Prof. C. Dreyer**

Potchefstroom  
November 1999

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the following individuals without whose cooperation this research would have been impossible:

- Prof. J.L. van der Walt, my supervisor, for his expert guidance and assistance.
- Prof. C. Dreyer, my assistant supervisor, for her unselfish support and advice.
- Mr. S. Marema, who gave me a computer course, and for his support throughout my studies.
- Ms. Susan van Vuuren, who translated the summary into Afrikaans, and helped me with the page layout.
- My friends and colleagues, for their support and encouragement.
- My brothers and sisters, for their love and encouragement.
- My children, Kamogelo and Remmy.
- The staff of the Ferdinand Postma Library, for their valuable assistance.
- Finally, all praise belongs to God, for His love, protection and guidance.

## **SUMMARY**

The aim of this study was to investigate factors that may influence students' attitude to English at college of education level.

Literature dealing with factors affecting students' attitude was reviewed in order to establish which factors play a prominent role in language learning, especially at college level, at home, in society as well as how these factors affect students' achievement in general.

In this study a questionnaire was used to determine how college students view their lecturer in terms of his/her personality, qualities, language proficiency, use of English in and out of the class, teaching method, teaching aids and teaching objectives. Students' views on group work, collaboration with and influence of their peers were also examined. The questionnaire was also used to investigate how the students' home circumstances affected their learning, as well as their attitudes towards English.

The results of the study indicate that affective factors play an important role in second language learning. These factors influence the individual's reactions to the teaching-learning method. Most students indicated that they preferred a lecturer who was friendly, allowed them to work at their own pace, was well prepared and used English all the time. They also indicated that they liked working in a group.

Home circumstances also play a role in learning because students from a low socioeconomic status seem to have a disadvantage, especially because of a lack of support from their parents.

These factors have implications for the student's achievement, because if he / she has a negative attitude, he / she will become discouraged and this impacts on his / her achievement.

## OPSOMMING

Die doel van hierdie studie was om faktore wat studente se houding teenoor Engels op onderwyskollege beïnvloed, te ondersoek.

'n Oorsig oor literatuur wat handel oor faktore wat studente se houding beïnvloed, is gedoen, om te bepaal watter faktore 'n prominente rol speel in die aanleer van taal, veral op kollege-vlak, tuis en in die samelewing, en hoe hierdie faktore studente se prestasie oor die algemeen beïnvloed.

In hierdie studie is 'n vraelys gebruik om te bepaal hoe studente op *kollege* hul dosente ervaar in terme van persoonlikheid, eienskappe, taalvaardigheid, gebruik van Engels binne en buite die klas, onderrigmetode, onderrighulpmiddels en onderrigdoelwitte. Studente se sieninge oor groepwerk, en samewerking met asook die invloed van die ouderdomsgroep is ook ondersoek. Die vraelys is ook gebruik om vas te stel hoe studente se huislike omstandighede hulle leervermoë en houding teenoor Engels beïnvloed.

Die resultate van die studie dui aan dat affektiewe faktore 'n belangrike rol speel in die onderrig van die tweede taal. Hierdie faktore beïnvloed die individu se reaksie op die onderrig-leermetodes. Die meeste studente het aangedui dat hulle 'n dosent verkies wat vriendelik is, hulle toelaat om teen hul eie pas te werk, goed voorbereid is en Engels deurgaans gebruik. Hulle het ook aangedui dat hulle daarvan hou om in 'n groep te werk.

Huislike omstandighede speel ook 'n rol in die leerproses: studente van lae sosio-ekonomiese status word klaarblyklik benadeel as gevolg van 'n gebrek aan ouer-ondersteuning.

Hierdie faktore het implikasies vir studente se prestasie: as die student 'n negatiewe houding het, veroorsaak dit dat hy / sy ontmoedig word. Dit sal vanselfsprekend 'n uitwerking hê op die student se prestasie.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Acknowledgements</b>	<b>i</b>
<b>Summary</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>Opsomming</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>List of tables</b>	<b>viii</b>

## **CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION**

<b>1.1 Statement of the problem</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>1.2 Aim of this study</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>1.3 Method of research</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>1.4 Programme of study</b>	<b>3</b>

## **CHAPTER 2: A REVIEW OF AFFECTIVE FACTORS IN SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING**

<b>2.1 Introduction</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2.2 Attitude</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>2.3 Motivation</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>2.4 Types of motivation</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>2.5 Anxiety</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>2.6 Self-confidence</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>2.7 Extroversion / introversion</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>2.8 Tolerance of ambiguity</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>2.9 Risk taking</b>	<b>17</b>

<b>2.10 Conclusion</b>	<b>19</b>
------------------------	-----------

### **CHAPTER 3: FACTORS THAT MAY INFLUENCE STUDENTS' ATTITUDE TO ENGLISH**

<b>3.1 Introduction</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>3.2 Factors that may influence students' attitude to English at a college of education</b>	<b>20</b>
3.2.1 The lecturer and lecturing	20
3.2.2 Peer group collaboration and influence	23
<b>3.3 Factors that may influence students' attitude to English at home</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>3.4 Factors that may influence students' attitude to English in society</b>	<b>27</b>
3.4.1 Attitude towards the English culture	27
3.4.2 Attitude towards learning English	29
<b>3.5. Achievement as a factor that may influence students' attitude to English</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>3.6. Conclusion</b>	<b>33</b>

### **CHAPTER 4: METHOD OF RESEARCH**

<b>4.1 Introduction</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>4.2 Subjects</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>4.3 Instrumentation</b>	<b>35</b>
<b>4.4 Data collection procedures</b>	<b>38</b>
<b>4.5 Analysis of the data</b>	<b>38</b>

## **CHAPTER 5: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS**

<b>5.1</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>5.2</b>	<b>College</b>	<b>39</b>
5.2.1	The lecturer and lecturing	39
5.2.1.1	<i>Like and dislike of English classes (Question 1)</i>	39
5.2.1.2	<i>Type of lecturer (Question 2)</i>	39
5.2.1.3	<i>Qualities of a lecturer (Question 3)</i>	40
5.2.1.4	<i>Language proficiency (Question 4)</i>	40
5.2.1.5	<i>Use of English in and out of class (Questions 5, 6, 7)</i>	41
5.2.1.6	<i>Teaching Method (Question 12)</i>	41
5.2.1.7	<i>Teaching Aids (Question 15)</i>	42
5.2.1.8	<i>Learning objectives (Question 16)</i>	42
5.2.1.9	<i>Group work (Questions 13 &amp; 14)</i>	42
5.2.1.10	<i>Collaboration with and influence of peers (Questions 8, 9, 10 &amp; 11)</i>	43
5.2.2.	Summary of factors that influence students' attitude	43
<b>5.3</b>	<b>Home circumstances</b>	<b>45</b>
5.3.1	Background (Questions 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22 & 23)	45
5.3.2	Exposure to English	47
5.3.2.1	<i>Television (Questions 26, 27 &amp; 28)</i>	47
5.3.2.2	<i>Newspapers (Questions 29 &amp; 32)</i>	47
5.3.2.3	<i>Magazines (Questions 30 &amp; 33)</i>	47
5.3.2.4	<i>Novels (Questions 31 &amp; 34)</i>	48
<b>5.4</b>	<b>Attitude towards English in society</b>	<b>48</b>
5.4.1	Attitude towards the English culture (Questions 35-43)	48
5.4.2	Attitude towards learning English	51
<b>5.5</b>	<b>Achievement</b>	<b>52</b>
<b>5.6</b>	<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>53</b>

**CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS  
FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

**6.1 Conclusions 55**

**6.2 Recommendations for future research 56**

**BIBLIOGRAPHY 58**

**APPENDIX 66**

## LIST OF TABLES

<b>Table 1:</b>	Factors influencing students' experience of lecturers and lecturing	44
<b>Table 2:</b>	Attitude towards the English culture	49
<b>Table 3:</b>	Attitude towards learning English	51

## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

A learner's progress in the acquisition of a second language is subject to personal, social, and linguistic constraints. Attainment may ultimately be constrained by non-linguistic factors, including affective ones. According to Gardner and MacIntyre (1993:1), affective variables refer to "those emotionally relevant characteristics of the individual that influence how she or he will respond to any situation". Studies investigating the relationship between affective factors and language learning abound in the literature (cf. Vrey, 1979; Bynner *et al.*, 1981; Krashen, 1982 & 1985; Stern, 1983; Skehan, 1990; Gardner & MacIntyre, 1993a).

Factors like attitude, motivation, anxiety, self-confidence, extroversion/introversion, tolerance of ambiguity, risk taking and achievement show a strong relationship to second language learning. The Affective Filter hypothesis proposed by Krashen (1982) captures the relationship between affective variables and the process of second language acquisition by positing that acquirers vary in respect of the strength and level of their Affective Filters. Those learners whose attitudes are not optimal for second language acquisition tend to seek less input, and they also have a high or strong Affective Filter. If that is the case, the input will not reach that part of the brain responsible for language acquisition, and it will not become intake. Those learners with attitudes more conducive to second language acquisition will usually seek and obtain input and also have lower or weaker filters, and they will be more open to input (Krashen, 1982: 310). The Affective Filter involves much more than attitude, however. It also involves learner preferences, especially in terms of the teachers and teaching-learning methods to which they are exposed.

Little is known about the attitudes to English of black English Second Language students at colleges of education. Many students come from deprived socio-economic backgrounds and have little contact with English-speaking people. Their performance in English is often very poor, and instruction is often not very efficient and effective at these colleges.

A number of factors may influence students' attitude towards English at college level. These include the lecturer and lecturing methods, as well as his/her language proficiency. Students' peer groups also seem to influence them. Other factors emanate from students' home circumstances. Factors such as attitude towards the English culture and attitude towards learning English may also have an influence on their performance. Students' achievement may in turn also influence their attitude towards the learning of English. In this regard, Gardner and MacIntyre (1993: 1) state that an interest in learning another language often develops because of a direct interest in the language itself. So, a common sense view is that certain needs and interests, which influence his performance, govern a person's behaviour. Since this cannot be observed, they need to be inferred from achievement in English (Ellis, 1985: 116).

The problem question that arises is: What are the factors that influence students' attitude towards English at college level? If these factors are identified and described, the teaching and learning of English may be made more effective than is the case at present.

## **1.2. AIM OF THIS STUDY**

The aim of this study is to investigate factors influencing attitude towards English at one college of education, viz. the Sekhukhune College of Education in the Northern Province.

### **1.3. METHOD OF RESEARCH**

Relevant literature on the various factors that may influence attitude towards English was reviewed.

In the empirical part of the study, a descriptive design was used to determine the factors that may influence students. The study population included 50 students of Sekhukhune College of Education taking English as a second language.

A questionnaire was used to assess the attitude of ESL students towards English at the college, at home and in the society, and the data were analysed by means of descriptive statistics (e.g. frequency counts) as well as a qualitative analysis of students' responses.

### **1.4. PROGRAMME OF STUDY**

- Chapter 2 focuses on the review of affective factors in second language learning.
- Chapter 3 discusses the factors that may influence students' attitude towards English at college, at home, in society and the relationship between attitude and achievement.
- Chapter 4 discusses the methodology employed in this study.
- In Chapter 5 the results are presented and discussed.
- Chapter 6 contains a conclusion and recommendations for further research.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **A REVIEW OF AFFECTIVE FACTORS IN SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING**

#### **2.1 INTRODUCTION**

An affective component is always involved in second language learning. The student approaches language with certain affective pre-dispositions; the actual learning of the language is accompanied by emotional reactions. The entire learning experience may lead to a fixed constellation of likes and dislikes directed towards the whole language in question, or features of that language, languages in general, the people speaking the language, and so on (Stern, 1983: 10).

Affective factors concern the emotional responses aroused by the attempts to learn a second language and they also seem to play an important role in acquiring a second language. According to Gardner and MacIntyre (1992: 211), affective factors are attributes that involve individuals' reactions to any situation. These can refer to attitude, motivation, language anxiety, a feeling of self-confidence about the language, extroversion, introversion, tolerance of ambiguity and risk taking. The aim of this chapter is to review the literature on these factors briefly.

#### **2.2 ATTITUDE**

Chapman (1990: 3) points out that attitude is not static, but an on-going dynamic, sensitive, perceptual process. Attitude is the way one communicates one's mood to others and the way one looks at things mentally. One can say that it is an emotional response to a social stimulus.

Attitude can be latent, conveyed by non-verbal and verbal processes and it is open to change and modification (cf. Pienaar & Spoelstra, 1991: 155). Attitude is a mental and neural state of readiness organised through experience and exerting a directive

or dynamic influence upon the individual's response to all objects and situations with which it is related. This definition can be regarded as a mentalist one, because the process is said to take place in the human mind (cf. Smit, 1996: 24).

From the behaviourist point of view, attitudes are said to be found in the response people have to social situations, and they can be regarded as "dispensable intervening variables between behaviour and the consequences of behaviour" (Smit, 1996).

Attitude is an invention of the observer because it is not directly observable, but can only be inferred from behaviour. These inferences help one to understand behavioural consistencies and inconsistencies. In a classroom setting, inferences help particularly in the motivational domain, because they provide explanations of why some students avoid tests and assignments, while others approach educational tasks without problems (Pienaar & Spoelstra, 1991: 155).

However, Michner and DeLamater (1994:144) argue that one cannot always rely on these inferences because some people do not put their attitude on display; that is, they do not show their attitudes overtly. In order to find out about people's attitudes, one has to ask questions and get responses to them.

Attitude can be either positive or negative. It is an evaluative reaction or a judgement regarding one's liking or disliking of a person, event or other aspect of the environment. It is said to be a non-neutral position (it is either positively or negatively inclined) (Smit, 1996: 25). According to Brown (1987: 127), a positive attitude towards self, the native language group and the target language group enhances proficiency. Negative attitudes may lead to decreased motivation and subsequently to unsuccessful attainment of proficiency.

It is therefore, the lecturer's responsibility to be aware of learners' attitudes, and that these may change. As mentioned in the previous section, attitudes are not static; it is

always possible to change from a positive attitude towards a negative attitude or vice versa.

For an individual to develop a positive attitude towards another culture he/she should be exposed to that culture by associating with actual people from that culture. Some teachers also make a point of inviting a native speaker to come and give a talk about his/her culture, education or religion (Brown, 1987: 128).

A person's attitudes influence the way in which he/she perceives and responds to the world (cf. Michner & DeLamater, 1994: 144). The manner in which one communicates with others reflects one's attitude. For instance, when one is optimistic and anticipates successful encounters, one transmits a positive way of looking at things and when this happens, people usually respond favourably. On the other hand, when one is pessimistic and expects the worst, one transmits a negative way of looking at things. When this happens, people tend to avoid contact with such a person (Chapman, 1992: 13).

Ellis (1994:199) summarises the main characteristics of attitude as follows:

- They are cognitive and affective.
- They are dimensional rather than bipolar; they vary in degree of favourability/ unfavourability.
- They predispose a person to act in a certain way, but the relationship between attributes and actions is not strong.
- They are learnt, not inherited or genetically endowed.
- They tend to persist but they can be modified by experience.

According to Chapman (1992: 15), each person is the guardian of his own attitude. He has full control over his attitude and can use it to his advantage. This is possible because attitude is a powerful controlling mechanism in a person's life. It helps one

to view life in a particular way. To a large extent, attitude even overrides many other personality characteristics.

Factors that may influence students' attitude at college of education discussed in detail in chapter 3.

## **2.3 MOTIVATION**

Engelbrecht *et al.* (1996: 406) define motivation as the act of providing an incentive for doing something. To motivate means to stimulate the interest of someone, or to inspire a person. Motivation is not a single activity that a teacher performs. Rather, it involves a complex set of ongoing attitudes and activities that occur in the classroom environment and that lead to the creation of a community of learners who are learning. Learners take ownership of their learning by managing the process of learning in co-operation with their peers and the educator. Motivation, therefore, requires initiating, sustaining and directing pupils' enthusiasm and perseverance in the pursuit of curricular goals.

Engelbrecht *et al.* (1996: 231 & 407) further state that motivation in teaching implies that the learning motives of the learner are selectively actualised according to an identified concrete learning aim or objective. For example, the teacher decides on the objective of the lesson and attempts to motivate the learner to master the learning content by making use of relevant strategies, methods and techniques. Within the learning environment, motivation is crucial to creating authentic learning experiences that promote positive attitudes about learning and sustain keen interest and enthusiasm. It is therefore, important for teachers or lecturers to formulate aims and objectives in the teaching-learning process.

The motivated individual is the one who wants to achieve a particular goal, devotes considerable effort to achieving this goal, and experiences satisfaction in the activities associated with achieving this goal (cf. Gardner & MacIntyre, 1993: 2).

Students should play an active role in the learning process. They must be given the opportunity to internalise information in ways that are meaningful to them.

Motivation is one of the major determining factors for success in second language development. It determines the extent of active, personal involvement in second language learning (Gardner & MacIntyre, 1993: 3).

## 2.4 TYPES OF MOTIVATION

Researchers (e.g. Dulay *et al.*, 1982; Sparks & Ganschow, 1991; Gardner & MacIntyre, 1993; Engelbrecht *et al.*, 1996) mention three different types of motivation that affect language acquisition, namely, integrative motivation, instrumental motivation, extrinsic and intrinsic motivation and social identification.

- **Integrative motivation** is the desire to achieve proficiency in a new language in order to participate in the life of the community that speaks the language. Gardner and MacIntyre (1993: 2) say that for one to be integratively motivated, one needs to have an interest in learning the language so as to communicate with members of the second language community. An integrative motivation is employed when learners wish to integrate themselves within the culture of the second language group, to identify themselves with and become part of the society (cf. Van der Walt, 1997: 35-36). Both Engelbrecht *et al.* (1996: 230) and Van der Walt (1997) state that integrative motivation does not necessarily imply direct contact with the second language group. For them, integrative motivation is the desire to learn the L2 in order to communicate with or find out about members of the second language culture. Ellis (1994:511) reviews studies that show the effect of integrative motivation on achievement in a second language. These studies show that there is a "remarkably strong" relationship between motivation and achievement. However, there are also studies that indicate that some learners may be motivated to excel because of negative attitude towards the target language community.

- **Instrumental motivation** is the desire to achieve proficiency in a new language for utilitarian reasons, such as getting a job. It reflects the practical value and advantages of learning a new language (cf. Sparks & Ganschow, 1991: 4-5). The language is acquired as an instrument to help students to attain goals such as furthering of careers and reading original publications for trade purposes and for travel. Gardner and Lambert (1972: 14) define instrumental motivation as being “more self-oriented in the sense that a person prepares to learn a new code in order to derive benefits of a non-interpersonal sort”.
- **Extrinsic motivation** is derived from factors outside the learning situation such as granting of marks, credits and certificates. The learner is dependent on external factors to be motivated to learn or achieve (cf. Gardner & MacIntyre, 1993: 4; Engelbrecht et. al., 1996: 231). Extrinsic motivation encourages competition amongst the learners and always motivates them to study hard in order to get high marks and good credits. An extrinsically motivated learner performs the task primarily as a means to an end to obtain tangible reward. The activity is approached as a “means to an end” while intrinsic motivation approaches activity as “an end itself” (Boggiano & Pittman, 1992: 38).
- **Intrinsic motivation** is inherent in the learning situation. The student is directly motivated by the subject matter and by everything that belongs to the teaching-learning situation. The learner shows spontaneous interest without the need for any outside encouragement. An intrinsically motivated learner is motivated by the intrinsic value of the learning task. This type of motivation is regarded as the prime mediator in the language learning process. Learners who are intrinsically motivated volunteer frequently and often give correct answers (Gardner & MacIntyre, 1993: 4). There are some cases where a learner wants to learn something not because he/she is interested in the subject, but because he/she wants to attain an ideal that is praiseworthy in itself (cf.2.3.1). One can be motivated to learn Latin because one hopes to utilise it in future for studies in law, and not because one is interested in the language (Gardner & MacIntyre, 1993: 2).

- **Social identification** is the desire to acquire proficiency in a language or language variety spoken by a social group with which the learner identifies. It is a drive to become an indistinguishable member of the speech community and usually requires prolonged contact with the target group (Brown, 1987: 117). Unlike integrative motivation where a learner only wants to learn the target language for communication purposes, social identification is therefore, characteristic of persons who learn a second language and its culture in order to identify with that second culture (cf. Engelbrecht *et al.*, 1996: 26). Engelbrecht *et al.* (1996: 226-267) state that in a situation where a learner does not want to acquire the language or language variety spoken by that group, he/she will obviously not have contact with the target group.

It seems that motivation plays an important role in second language learning, as it is one of the determining factors for success in developing a second language. For effective teaching to take place learners need to be motivated and lectures should always create a conducive atmosphere for learning. Motivation is an inherent constituent of education. It is, therefore, necessary to foster motivation in the classroom setting to accomplish the learning aim (Stipek, 1988: 51).

## 2.5 ANXIETY

Anxiety in language learning can be defined as a complex experience related in part to communication apprehension, social evaluation and test anxiety. According to Gardner and MacIntyre (1993: 5), communication apprehension is a response to the act of speaking, while social evaluation emerges from the social nature of language use. Second language communication involves self-presentation in a language in which the speaker has only attained limited competency. Test anxiety refers to the different academic language learning environments and would be relevant to situations involving formal instruction (Gardner & MacIntyre, 1993: 5).

Gardner and MacIntyre (1993: 6) point out that language anxiety refers to the propensity of an individual to react in a nervous manner when speaking, reading or writing in a second language. It is characterised by derogatory self-related expressions like 'I cannot do this', a feeling of apprehension and physiological responses, such as an increased heart rate. An anxious learner will be less likely to volunteer answers in class and will be reluctant to express personally relevant information in a second language conversation. A demand to answer a question in an L2 class may cause a student to become anxious. This anxiety will diminish cognitive performance and will subsequently lead to negative self-evaluation that further impairs performance (MacIntyre, 1995: 91).

Although Gardner and MacIntyre (1993: 6) argue that language anxiety arises from early negative experiences, particularly with speaking an L2, it would, however, be expected to decline as the student gains proficiency, provided that the student continues to study or use the second language.

According to Skehan (1990: 115), an anxious person is sometimes moody and restless. Anxiety can also cause stress and learners will always try everything possible to avoid a stressful situation. For example, if an anxious student experiences a class as a source of stress, he is likely to avoid coming to the class.

Some anxiety may be beneficial and energizing in high ability students, in that it can stimulate an activity. Higher proficiency learners have a wider repertoire of behaviours that enable them to cope with anxiety-provoking situations more flexibly. On the other hand, anxiety is associated with poor performance and even failure in poor achievers and average students. It can be argued that students that perform badly and fail are more likely to suffer anxiety. An anxious student is less likely to participate actively in class and sometimes anxiety can result from low achievement - (Skehan, 1990: 117).

Studies of the correlation between anxiety and achievement have shown mixed results (e.g. Horwitz 1986; Ely, 1986). Ellis (1994: 482) states that there are several

reasons for these mixed results. One is that the relationship between anxiety and achievement is probably not a linear one. Another reason is that poor achievement can be the cause as well as the result of anxiety. However, Ellis (1994: 483) points out that there is sufficient evidence to show that anxiety is an important factor in second language acquisition. It is a factor that affects learning in differing degrees in different learners.

Anxiety generally occurs in situations where there is a threat to the individual's self-esteem. Anxious students avoid highly evaluative situations and choose to do easy tasks where success is fairly certain (Stipek, 1988: 104).

A distinction can be made between trait anxiety and state anxiety:

- **Trait anxiety**

According to Spielberger *et al.* (1970: 3), "trait anxiety refers to relatively stable individual differences in anxiety proneness, that is, to differences between people in the tendency to respond to situations perceived as threatening with elevations in A-state (state anxiety) intensity".

For example, some individuals respond with different levels of anxiety to situations that are perceived as threatening. A person with high trait anxiety would be highly anxious in most situations, and a person with low trait anxiety would be low in anxiety even in relatively threatening situations. It can thus be said that trait anxiety is a more permanent predisposition to be anxious. It is a relatively stable personality characteristic (Ball, 1977: 93).

- **State anxiety**

State anxiety refers to feelings of apprehension and heightened autonomic nervous system activity that vary in intensity and fluctuate over time (Van der Walt, 1997: 45-47).

Spielberger *et al.* (1970: 3) state that state anxiety is a "transitory emotional state or condition of the human organism that varies in intensity and fluctuate over time." It is perceived by Spielberger *et al.* (1970) as tension at a specific moment and a reaction to a particular situation. A student tackling a new project or an examination for the first time is more likely to exhibit state anxiety.

Anxiety can have an important negative effect on second language learning. An anxious student can have more difficulties in L2 learning than the one with low anxiety. It is generally true that students who are poorly prepared for a class and expect to fail are more likely to experience anxiety than students who are well prepared and self-confident. Stipek (1988: 107) states that poor preparation causes anxiety and poor performance. Anxiety is, therefore, a cause as well as a consequence of poor preparation, and it interferes with optimal performance and inhibits pre-processing of new information.

## **2.6 SELF-CONFIDENCE**

The antithesis of the anxious student is the self-confident one. Self-confidence plays an important role in second language learning because it is positively related to proficiency. Self-confidence develops as a result of experiences associated with learning and using a second language (Gardner & MacIntyre, 1993: 7).

Self-confidence is an important dimension of self-concept, which includes two components: the affective aspect (language use anxiety) and self-evaluation of L2 proficiency (the cognitive aspect). The frequency and quality of communication between different cultural groups (especially contacts) determine self-confidence in L2 speakers. Self-confidence is a major motivational subsystem in L2 learning situations (cf. Dornyei, 1994: 277). Dornyei (1994: 277) states that the learner should always be guided to obtain knowledge of and insight into his own unique cognitive, emotional, spiritual and social personality equipment. To acquire self-confidence, the learner should enjoy the honest and realistic emotional support,

trust, praise and respect of the teacher or the lecturer. The acquisition and mastery of language and social skills can contribute to the elimination and prevention of negative emotions and the development of self-confidence (cf. Engelbrecht *et al.*, 1996: 254).

The self-confident person is usually more successful in language learning and has the added advantage of not fearing rejection as much as those who lack self-confidence. He is also more likely to take in and process what he hears at any given moment (Engelbrecht *et al.*, 1996: 435).

Self-confidence is one of the important emotional factors that play a role in second language learning. Mental ability and self-confidence can both be predictors of students' performance in language learning.

According to Schwarzer (1992: ix), self-confident students choose to perform more challenging tasks and set themselves challenging goals and stick to them. Depending on the level of self-confidence, it can either impede or enhance second language levels.

## **2.7 EXTROVERSION / INTROVERSION**

Skehan (1990: 100-101) states that the typical extrovert is sociable, likes parties, has many friends, needs to have people to talk to and does not like studying by himself. He craves excitement, takes chances, often sticks his neck out and is generally an impulsive individual. He always has a ready answer. An extrovert is easily distracted from studying partly as a result of his gregariousness and partly because of an inability to concentrate for any length of time. He also has superior immediate recall, but poorer recall after a long period of time. The extroverted learners often find it easier to make contact with other users of the L2 and, therefore, are likely to develop and improve their language skills as a result (Ellis, 1985: 120).

Both Stern (1983: 380) and Ellis (1985: 120) state that learners who are sociable are inclined to talk, to join groups, to participate in class, to volunteer, to engage in practice activities and to maximise language for communication. Thus extroverts are benefiting both inside and outside of the classroom because they have the appropriate personality trait for language use (as distinct from general, content-oriented learning). Extroverts are likely to maximise language output, because they assume that the process of using language is important for general development and social interaction.

On the other hand, Ellis (1985: 120) states that a typical introvert is a quiet, retiring sort of a person, introspective, fond of books rather than people. He is reserved and distant, except with intimate friends. He does not like excitement and takes matters of everyday life with proper seriousness, and likes a well-ordered mode of life (cf. Skehan, 1990: 100). Introversions is often associated with good study methods and often correlates significantly with achievement. Introversions is regarded as advantageous to the systematic study of language as it is normally associated with good study methods (Stern, 1983: 380).

Stern (1983) suggests that the student who tends to withdraw from social interaction, inhibits his/her ability to learn the L2. Likewise, the student who is always preoccupied with inner thoughts and feelings has less chance to succeed in second language learning than his extroverted counterpart. Stern (1983) supports the idea that if the interpersonal aspect of language learning (as in the Communicative Approach) is emphasised in the classroom, extroversions is an asset. To be sociable and outgoing is an appropriate strategy to be adopted by students in the development of communication skills (Stern, 1983: 380).

As pointed out in the above discussion, extroverted learners are more sociable, and they are likely to be more fluent than introverts, as they are not afraid or shy to communicate in the L2 (Ellis, 1994: 520).

Introverts typically develop cognitive academic language proficiency and achieve superior academic success. Introverts have also proved to be strong on long-term memory recall, which would also reflect on their superior academic achievement (Brown, 1994: 146).

At this stage, it is difficult to come up with a clear-cut statement on whether extroversion or introversion impedes or enhances L2 learning. The research literature indicates that introversion is not a predictor of success in language learning (cf. Dewaele & Furnham, 1999). It affects L2 speech production, however. There is a positive correlation between extroversion scores and fluency in a number of studies on oral language (e.g. Yapasak *et al.*, 1978; Vogel & Vogel, 1986; Dewaele, 1996). It has been hypothesised that stress in a formal situation may have a detrimental effect on the fluency of introverts, while it does not have this effect on extroverts (Dewaele & Furnham, 1999: 537).

## **2.8 TOLERANCE OF AMBIGUITY**

Skehan (1990: 106) states that tolerance of ambiguity is the acceptance of confusing situations. An ambiguous situation is characterised by novelty, complexity and insolubility. Tolerance of ambiguity is defined as the tendency to perceive such situations as acceptable. Students who can tolerate moderate levels of ambiguity are more likely to persist in language learning than students who cannot tolerate ambiguous situations.

Stern (1983: 382) also points out that tolerance of ambiguity is the tendency to perceive an ambiguous situation as acceptable and normal. Tolerance of ambiguity is considered to be a useful characteristic of a good language learner and it is a good predictor of success. For example, the learner who is capable of tolerating the frustrations of ambiguous situations in language learning is emotionally in a better position to cope with the situation than the learner who feels angry and frustrated in ambiguous situations. In life, some people are relatively "open minded" in accepting ideologies, events and facts that contradict their own views. Other people are "closed

mindeds" more dogmatic, tend to reject items that are contradictory with their existing system, they always wish to see every proposition fit into an acceptable place in their cognitive organization and if it does not fit, it is rejected. It, therefore, means that a person who is tolerant of ambiguity is free and is not affected by ambiguity and uncertainty (Brown, 1987: 90).

In second language learning, a great amount of contradictory information typically confronts the learner. For example, there are English words that differ from the native language, grammatical rules that are inconsistent because of certain exceptions and a cultural system that is different from that of the native culture. So, successful language learning necessitates tolerance of such ambiguity for interim periods, during which time ambiguous items are given a chance to be resolved.

Too much tolerance of ambiguity can be detrimental to language learning. Students can become "wishy-washy" by accepting every proposition before them. Such excess tolerance can hamper or prevent meaningful subsumption of ideas. Brown (1987: 90) points out that intolerance of ambiguity has its advantages and disadvantages. A certain amount of intolerance enables one to guard against the wishy-washiness referred to above, to close off avenues of hopeless possibilities, to reject entirely contradictory material and to deal with the system that one has built. Intolerance can also close the mind too soon, especially if ambiguity is perceived as a threat and the result can be a rigid dogmatic mind that is too narrow to be creative. This will ultimately be harmful in second language learning.

## **2.9 RISK TAKING**

Risk taking is the willingness to take chances in language learning. A person who takes risks is not afraid to make mistakes during the process of learning. Risk taking has a positive correlation to tolerance of ambiguity. Those who tolerate ambiguity are more likely to take risks in language learning. Risk taking is important for progress in second language learning because people learn from their mistakes. Students who

avoid risks do so to avoid anticipated criticism from others or self-criticism and their language practice becomes restricted as a result (Skehan 1990: 106).

According to Kindler (1990: 6), appropriate risk taking is fundamental to success and personal satisfaction. It, therefore, means that achievers are usually risk takers because risk involves exposing oneself to discomfort or loss for the sake of moving beyond present limitations.

Risk taking is generally and pervasively good in the sense that, in situations containing social interaction, it is regarded as likely to increase opportunities to obtain input by listening to and speaking the language (use output and engage in functional practice) (cf. Skehan, 1990: 107; Ellis, 1985: 187).

Ely (1986: 3) states that in a risk taking situation, the students have to be able to gamble a bit and take a risk of being wrong. For a risk-taker to succeed, the following steps should be followed: clarify the objectives you want to achieve, structure the alternative paths to your objectives and evaluate the stated objectives.

If lecturers want students to take risks or volunteer new information when communicating, they must at the same time know that risk taking goes along with inaccuracy. A learner who takes risks or keep on trying during lessons does not always give correct answers. He/she has to commit a mistake for effective learning to take place. This means that for a learner to be successful, he/she first needs to try and learn from his/her own mistakes. This is because risk taking and accuracy are negatively correlated (cf. Beebe, 1983: 60).

Every risk taken involves a possibility of failure. It is, therefore, necessary for lecturers to motivate student to be moderate risk takers. This can be achieved if students are encouraged to have objectives in learning or the English class.

## 2.10 CONCLUSION

This chapter has focused on a review of the literature on affective variables. According to Krashen (1981: 37), a good language learner is an acquirer, who first of all, is able to obtain a sufficient intake in the second language and has a low affective filter to enable him to utilize this input for language acquisition. Language learners do not learn everything they hear. Their motives, needs, attitudes and emotional states filter what they hear and therefore, affect the rate and quality of language learning (cf. Dulay *et al.*, 1982: 46).

Anxiety usually affects the learners' academic progress and particularly their L2 learning. Despite the valuable input made by schooling, a learner may fail to process that input if he or she is emotionally insecure and lacks a positive attitude. It therefore, means that language learning can take place when motivation is high, self-confidence is strong and when anxiety is low (Engelbrecht *et al.*, 1996: 336-337).

It is evident that affective factors play a role in second language learning. The process of learning is always accompanied by certain emotional reactions that influence second language learning. For a student to learn effectively, he must develop a positive attitude, be motivated, have self-confidence, take risks and be sociable.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **FACTORS THAT MAY INFLUENCE STUDENTS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS ENGLISH**

#### **3.1 INTRODUCTION**

Learners manifest different attitudes towards English at college, at home and in society. Achievement as another factor may also influence attitude, and vice versa. These attitudes are likely to reflect the particular social settings in which learners find themselves (Ellis, 1994: 198). The factors that may influence students' attitudes to English are discussed in this chapter.

#### **3.2 FACTORS THAT MAY INFLUENCE STUDENTS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS ENGLISH AT A COLLEGE OF EDUCATION**

Factors that play a role in influencing students' attitude at a college of education are discussed below:

##### **3.2.1 The lecturer and lecturing**

Students will inevitably have different views on the kind of lecturer that they think is best for them. For effective learning to take place, the lecturer needs to motivate students by being friendly and caring. Some students prefer a lecturer who creates 'space' for them to pursue their own learning paths, while others prefer a lecturer who structures the learning tasks much more tightly. Students may prefer to write tasks and/or assignments at their own time without following the lecturer's instruction (Ellis, 1985: 103). According to Ellis (1985: 103), language teaching requires a lecturer who regards himself as a facilitator, advisor and counsellor rather than an instructor and assessor. As the advisor, the lecturer needs to give students enough time to learn on their own and at their own pace. The lecturer should always be

aware of the fact that he is, in principle, in the same position as the learner, because in most cases he also speaks English as a second language (cf. Alatis, et al. 1983: 153; Tlale, 1991: 17).

The lecturer's skills and his personality are instrumental in creating the conditions for and enjoyment of learning (cf. Tlale, 1991: 18). His skill is dependent on two factors: his own proficiency in the language and his own knowledge and expertise in methods and techniques of language teaching. A well-prepared lecturer will always motivate students to have a positive attitude towards learning, unlike the lecturer who does not prepare thoroughly. Chidolue (1996: 263) says that the ultimate test of lecturers' effectiveness is his/her students' performance. It means that students' achievement in English always reflect the way in which they are taught (cf. Engelbrecht *et al.*, 1996: 315).

According to Muthukrishna (1994:15), it is clear that a lecturer who has a negative attitude towards the target language, or who himself has difficulty in speaking the language he teaches, is not going to succeed in inculcating in his learners a good command of the language. Lecturers can consciously or unconsciously pass or transmit their attitude towards their students, more than any other users of second language (Crismore, 1996: 321). Learning objectives need to be realistically set in the light of the lecturer's own skill in the language (cf. 2.3.1).

It is the responsibility of the lecturer to encourage his/her students to communicate in English both inside and outside the classroom situation. No language can be properly learned without being practised. Different kinds of teaching styles (e.g. discussion and group work) assist students in improving their language usage and creating positive attitudes towards learning in particular and education in general. Students are encouraged to imitate the lecturer, especially if he/she insists on the use of the target language.

Dreyer (1995: 291) points out that students require diversified teaching methods in order to learn more effectively. She states that different teaching methods

correspond with different learning styles. It is thus necessary to adopt a variety of teaching methods.

At many colleges of education, each lecturer has more than 50 students in a class. It is difficult for lecturers to teach effectively in such overcrowded classrooms. There are so many students in a class that the lecturer finds it difficult to control students' work, to assess each individual student's performance effectively, to give individual attention, to get to know each learner's weak and strong points, and to vary methods of teaching. For effective learning to take place, classes should be reduced to smaller and manageable numbers (McCormick & Pressley, 1997: 240). Group work is one way of doing this. Participating in group activity improves the students' confidence and fluency (cf. 2.5) and also helps them develop strategies to improve all their language skills simultaneously. By means of group discussion, they synthesise everybody's contribution in a logical and organised manner. In this way they may realise that different ideas can contribute to their learning of a subject (Chitrapu, 1996: 31).

Group work also assists students in becoming independent. It is a good method of making students responsible for their own learning, and to enable them to interact with others - unlike the lecturing method, where the lecturer stands in front of the class and just passes knowledge to students, without being sure that students understand what he is saying.

McCormick and Pressley (1997: 73) mention four advantages of group activity:

- Task completion requires every student's help.
- Students will participate more actively in small groups than in large groups.
- Individual accountability becomes essential and students can assist one another.
- Effectiveness if there is sufficient commitment on the students' part.

According to Powell (1993: 129), peer group interaction promotes responsibility on the part of the learner and encourages effective learning. Students' command of the English language can be displayed in writing and oral presentation, especially during group discussions (Yousef, 1989: 165).

There is evidence to show that learners who frequently participate in classroom interaction achieve more and better than learners who do not (Ellis, 1994: 511-512). These are students who volunteer answers, give correct answers and receive positive reinforcement. The higher their integrative motivation, the more this classroom behaviour is evident.

The use of teaching aids contributes to creating a positive attitude towards learning. Students who are learning a second language must be given opportunities to experience the situation practically and that can be done through teaching aids (Herbst, 1988: 16). Teaching aids not only help students to sustain concentration; they also help them to comprehend what the lecturer is saying. The use of the mother tongue is not recommended, and the lecturer should make her/himself understood not only by facial expression, body language and gestures, but also by using effective teaching aids (cf. Blythe-Lord, 1991: 30).

Some students need help in focusing their efforts on the achievement of a goal. Achieving a goal requires a conscious direction of activities towards some desired end points. Goal setting guides the formulation of plans of action and the evaluation of the progress towards the desired end state (cf. Schunk, 1990: 73; McCormick & Pressley, 1997: 38). It is, therefore, essential that the lecturer should make the objectives of each lecture clear.

### **3.2.2 Peer group collaboration and influence**

Peer group activity can assist students in achieving success. According to Powell (1993: 121), peer group support is crucial for a relaxed atmosphere and many techniques can be utilized to encourage peer respect and support. For example, the

class can be divided into groups in order to establish a conducive classroom climate. The group-work technique creates a good social climate with opportunities for student- student interaction and gives students the tools they need to continue improving their learning skills. Students should be made responsible for their own learning. They must be encouraged to take risks (cf. 2.8) in using the target language by making mistakes and learning from them (cf. Chitrapu, 1996: 31).

Contrary to what has been said above, some students at college sometimes have the tendency to discourage their peers in class by laughing at each other when he/she makes an error. For example, during the lecture, a lecturer often asks questions, and when a learner attempts to answer, one finds that some students pass funny comments to try to confuse the one who is trying to give the answer. This type of behaviour has a negative influence on some of the students, and they end up being afraid to take risks in answering the question. This results in students being afraid to expose themselves to their peers. When they are told to work with others, they make use of their mother tongue and later, when they are alone, they translate the work into English. Students end up not answering questions because they are afraid to be laughed at.

### **3.3 FACTORS THAT MAY INFLUENCE STUDENTS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS ENGLISH AT HOME**

Students' socio-economic background may influence their attitudes to and achievement in English.

Wolfendale (1992) addresses the issue of how students learn at home, how they communicate with family members and how relationships are formed at home. Wolfendale (1992: 22) points out that parents are influential in the education of their children. In cases where parents do not show any interest in the progress of their children, they (children or learners) will have no reassurance and encouragement that they deserve (cf. Barret, 1996: 11).

Many students at colleges of education come from rural areas where parental support is minimal. In most cases students do not stay with their parents or parents are working far from home. In such instances the students usually do not have parental motivation.

Greenhalgh (1994: 71) points out that where contact is not possible between the student and his/her parents, there is no opportunity for the formation of parent-child relationships, since the parents' support is not available. This may deprive students of the opportunity to develop meaningful strategies for interacting with others. Family dynamics often have a strong effect on the development of the student's personal constructs or his/her ways of experiencing the world.

The value that each family attaches to education determines the motivation with which each student pursues such education (Ezewu, 1983: 24). Supportive parents tend to show more concern over their children's performance. Most supportive parents help their children during the learning process by assisting their children at home, which is good motivation (cf. Greenhalgh, 1994: 71). According to Ezewu (1983: 23), individuals as well as families in society are different and the determining factors of such differentiation are educational levels, occupation and income of the family. The status of a family affects attitudes and values in life. Some of the areas in which socio-economic status affects education are discussed below.

Families with a high socio-economic status usually prepare their children for school more adequately than those with a low socio-economic status. As a result, students coming from a high socio-economic status family are often better prepared for the learning situation and stand a better chance of succeeding in their studies.

Engelbrecht *et al.* (1996: 335) state that wealthy and well-educated parents provide initial advantages for their children. They utilise private nursery schools and deploy resources in a manner which create pre-school conditions. Such advantages are difficult to be matched among the poor, uneducated and rural families. Poor families

cannot afford to offer their children pre-school education to help ease the transition from home to school.

People with a high socio-economic status usually earn a higher income and value school education more than those of low socio-economic status. They are more likely to possess the financial means and willingness to provide their children with books and the necessary school materials such as magazines, novels and newspapers (Engelbrecht *et al.*, 1996: 335).

Engelbrecht *et al.* (1999) state that students from a disadvantaged socio-economic background face general linguistic deprivation, that is, a lack of learning materials at home (magazines, novels, television sets and newspapers). This ultimately diminishes their chances of success at this college of education that is mentioned in the research. Extensive reading increases a learner's receptive vocabulary and facilitates the transfer to a more active use of the language.

A lack of electricity at home also influences learning in the sense that students from a low socio-economic status are compelled to collect firewood and make fire so that they can wash with warm water before going to school. Activities such as the collecting of firewood and water are valued more than schooling. Learners often have to cook for the family before they can go to school. Many parents insist on this, because they feel that cooked food should be readily available at all times. The presence of electricity would in a way alleviate this problem. Sometimes a student is late for school because his parents require him to help with household chores before he goes to school. Constantly arriving late for school is bound to have an adverse effect on a student's academic achievement. Another problem is that students may sometimes be tired, hungry and fall asleep during lessons. This could be ascribed to a lack of food and not enough rest at home (cf. Ezewu, 1983: 11).

Even if low socio-economic status families are worried about their children's poor performance, they may not be able to assist their children. This is so because the parents themselves have had little education. They are also unable to afford the

appointment of part-time tutors. High socio-economic status families are thus able to give more parental help and better motivation to their children than those of low socio-economic status (Ezewu, 1983: 26).

In the light of the above statements, one realises that the socio-economic status of the family may have an effect on the language development of the student and their education in general.

### **3.4 FACTORS THAT MAY INFLUENCE STUDENTS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS ENGLISH IN SOCIETY**

Factors that influence students' attitude towards English in society are discussed below:

#### **3.4.1 Attitude towards the English culture**

A student's attitude towards the second-language culture may affect his/her achievement in English.

Moyo (1997: 44) points out that, in most second language classrooms, cultural and cross-cultural awareness do not usually form part of the syllabus at school. It is, therefore, difficult for students to master the English culture, and to learn concepts that may be foreign to them. Culture and language are integral parts of learning. Learners must first be taught about their own culture before they can learn other people's culture. In this way they will become enculturated and become able to learn more about another culture. This will come about not just through teaching, but also through reading newspapers, magazines and watching television.

The content of language lessons (English in particular) is often far removed from the learners' world and culture. The content of English language should start from the known (i.e. the learner's culture) and proceed to the unknown "as learners progress

in their quest to broaden their literacy horizon. Thus the range of texts in use should reflect the culture surrounding the learners" (Moyo, 1997: 42).

The learners' interest can be stimulated by first exposing them to the literature from their immediate world and subsequently to world literature.

Branford (1996: 42) states that English provides access to educational and job opportunities but also acts as a barrier to such opportunities for those who lack it or whose English is poor. It also works integratively as a language of communication for people of different mother tongues. English is an important key to knowledge of science and the world of literature and current affairs. It is, therefore, imperative to learn more about the English culture and be familiar with it.

Wolfendale (1992: 70) mentions that, even within a homogeneous society, the language of the home is different from the language developed at school or college. In second language learning, when new words are taught, the learner usually struggles to comprehend the content and sometimes become discouraged. This may cause the learner to experience a lack of belonging because he/she is forced to deny a personal heritage and yet he/she does not fully belong to the school culture either.

To increase the complexity of the situation, most black parents in South Africa want their children to be taught in English. English is not their mother tongue; they want this but because it is regarded as the international language and as a key to open all the doors of learning (cf. Engelbrecht *et al.*, 1996: 315). However, the same parents who want their children to be taught in English are unable to foster any development of the English language for themselves and this can create a problem both at home and this college that is mentioned in the research.

When one tries to adopt new speech patterns, one is to some extent giving up one's own identity in order to adopt that of another cultural group. In some respects, one is accepting another culture's way of perceiving the world. One of the factors

influencing how one experiences the process is one's attitude towards the foreign culture itself (Morgan, 1993: 64). It is therefore, important to determine the attitude of learners to English.

Ellis (1985: 251) states that language is inseparable from culture. As learners learn about the language, they learn about the culture, and as they learn to use a new language, they learn to communicate with other individuals from a new culture. Second language learning is just one aspect of acculturation and the degree to which a learner acculturates to the target language group will control the degree to which he acquires the second language.

From the above statements, it is evident that cultural education aims at self-formation and social formation. Language is, therefore, one of the components of culture. That is why some people talk of the culture of learning when referring to the teaching-learning situation.

### **3.4.2 Attitude towards learning English**

Ellis (1985: 251) points out that if the learner is favourably disposed towards the speakers of the language he is learning, he is more likely to learn faster than the one who learns it in isolation. As pointed out above, the learner with a more favourable attitude will wish for more intensive contact with the second language community because favourable attitudes reinforce the extent to which a learner perceives communicative needs. In situations where circumstances do not compel members of different language groups to have contact with each other, the learner's attitude may determine whether he perceives any communicative need at all. Cultural understanding and linguistic competence have an instrumental purpose in terms of career prospects.

However, Littlewood (1984: 56) mentions that there are some learning situations where many learners have not had sufficient exposure to the second language community to have attitudes for or against it. In such cases, it is probable that

attitudes relate directly to learning as it is experienced in the classroom. One important aspect of this experience is the image of the community that the learner derives from the teacher and the materials. If this image remains second-hand, however, it will remain a weak factor compared with more general aspects of motivation, such as enjoyment and the experience of success.

From the above discussion, it is obvious that language cannot be properly learned without familiarity with features of the target culture, since language and culture are inextricably connected. On the other hand, it is impossible to master the linguistic code without at the same time acquiring a knowledge of the social values of the target language group or the social or political institutions of the community in question (cf. Wilkins, 1974: 49).

### **3.5 ACHIEVEMENT AS A FACTOR THAT MAY INFLUENCE STUDENTS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS ENGLISH**

According to Krumboltz (1965: 4), the term 'achievement' is used more generally to measure the learners' performance. Performance is an observable human accomplishment, while behaviour is what performance brings about (the outcome of behaviour).

One can observe an individual closing the door, that is his/her performance, and the proof of it is the outcome - the door is closed (Krumboltz, 1965:4). The reason why performance is related to learning is because it must be used to define what happens in the classroom situation. It can thus be said that learning has taken place when there is a difference in performance of a student from time 'A' to time 'B'. On one day a student cannot construct an English sentence, and on a subsequent day he can. The change in his performance is what provides evidence of learning.

Swap (1993:164) states that the key element of an institution of learning is that student outcome should be the focus of each learning institution. So, all resources should be used to maximise the academic achievement of the student by improving

the teaching-learning environment through the ongoing collective and collaborative efforts of the teacher and the student.

According to Dwyer (1982:12), achievement refers to the assessment of the outcomes of formal instruction in cognitive domains. The instruction carries with it the expectation that will produce observable changes in behaviour of those who are being instructed. Achievement in a second language traditionally has been viewed in terms of knowledge about the structure of the language, such as vocabulary, grammar and pronunciation or in terms of proficiency in the four basic skills: speaking, writing, understanding, and reading. More recently, attention has been focused on communicative competence (ability to communicate in the target language). These various interpretations of achievement deal with the extent to which language material has been taken in by students and made part of their own cognitive or behavioural repertoire (Gardner, 1985:12).

Five major uses of achievement tests are outlined by Dwyer (1982:15): student motivation, teacher feedback, certification and selection, and credit for courses or advanced study. Achievement tests are used to motivate students to study by forming the major basis for course grades. Many lecturers use achievement tests to signal important material or key concepts within a course. For example, the lecturer sets a series of skill or knowledge objectives, and then the concepts underlying these objectives are taught to the students. At a later stage the students are then tested on these particular concepts. The results of the testing are reviewed, and then the lecturer either re-teaches the material in different ways or goes on to the next objectives (Dwyer, 1982:16).

Achievement tests are also used to assess student progress at the end of the year and for issuing certificates when students have passed or completed their diploma course.

Achievement tests are used to determine students' abilities, to measure what they have learned, and to determine the effectiveness of educational programmes. The

test results are sometimes also used to select employees for corporations, and to place and guide them when they hired or appointed.

Phillips (1992:15) mentions that there is a relationship between attitude and achievement. For example, worry and other task-irrelevant cognitive activities associated with anxiety often impair the quality of performance.

Studies investigating the relationship of attitudes and motivation to second language achievement agree that attitude towards the second language does affect learning (cf. Gardner & Lambert, 1959; 1972; Gardner & Smythe, 1975a; 1975b). Gardner and Smythe (1979: 242-306) give an example of a study that was conducted on students learning French as a second language. The findings indicated that achievement in a second language is associated with willingness or desire to learn the language of a valued second language community for the purpose of improving communication with them.

Gardner and Lambert (1979: 306) investigated the role of attitude in relation to learning Hebrew among students in Montreal, and the relationship between attitude and achievement in English among senior high school students in Manila, Republic of the Philippines. The studies showed that there is a relationship between attitude and second language achievement.

Schumann (1975:218) states that students who have a positive attitude towards learning French as a second language, the French course, the French teacher and who felt that they had a good deal of parental encouragement to learn French were likely to be successful learners. In addition, students who experienced substantial anxiety in the French class were not as proficient in French as those who were relaxed.

The student's achievement or performance depends on his/her attitude. The expression 'I cannot think any more' is a symptom of a negative attitude, which in turn weakens efficiency. The relationship between attitude and achievement is

affected by the difficulty of the task and also by the ability of the student (Cross, 1974: 216).

The future of students usually depends upon success in examinations. When a comparison is made between language learning achievement in those countries where a knowledge of one or more foreign languages is regarded very favourably, and those where it is regarded with indifference or even hostility, it is clear that social and cultural attitudes have a very deep influence on individual learners. The achievement will be highest where attitudes and teaching together promote effective learning (Wilkins, 1974: 44).

The students' attitudes towards achievement develop from the positive outcomes that follow their performance on achievement oriented tasks. Students who have a positive attitude towards the second language learning are likely to be successful, while a negative attitude impairs learning (Ball, 1977: 124).

### **3.6 CONCLUSION**

The lecturer as the facilitator in the learning situation encounters many problems in the classroom that require an understanding of his/her students. The lecturer's personality, his/her background, skills, good command of English, methods of teaching, students' background, peer group influence and cultural background (in which learning takes place) are instrumental in every learning situation.

Generally, students from a high socio-economic status do not encounter difficulty in learning, because the importance of education is impressed upon them from an early age. So, in the instance where students come from high socio-economic status, the school becomes an extension of their home.

Lack of continuity between the home culture and the demands made on students at college (especially those from low socio-economic status) add to their difficulty in

language learning. Socio-economic factors have an impact on the type of education that the learner receives at home.

The fact that families do not attach the same importance to education leads to differences in the degree of motivation between a learner and his/her parents.

For students to learn effectively, they need to familiarize themselves with the target culture, by example, watching television programmes, reading magazines, newspapers and novels of the target culture.

Students need to be motivated to have a positive attitude towards English. A positive attitude will also help them to improve their academic achievement. Swap (1993) states that the key element of an institution of learning is that student outcome should be a focus of each learning experience. The teaching-learning situation needs to be improved to maximise the academic achievement of students.

According to Wolfendale (1992: 79), it is important to build a strong relationship between lecturers, parents and students. This relationship should be a continuing process throughout and it should also share the concerns and problems of the students, celebrate jointly the success of the students and review and monitor their progress.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **METHOD OF RESEARCH**

#### **4.1 INTRODUCTION**

The methodology employed in this study is discussed under the following headings:

- Subjects
- Instrumentation
- Data collection procedures
- Data analysis

#### **4.2 SUBJECTS**

The accessible study population comprised 50 students taking English as a second language at Sekhukhune College of Education. This college is situated in a village in a rural area of the Northern Province, where English is used mainly in the classroom situation. The subjects were all Northern Sotho speaking students taught by three lecturers.

#### **4.3 INSTRUMENTATION**

Both Ellis (1994: 199) and Michner and DeLamater (1994: 149) point out that attitude can be measured both indirectly and directly. The most direct way of finding out someone's attitude is to ask direct questions and record the person's response.

To make the process more systematic, social psychologists employ several methods, including the Single item measure, Likert scales and Semantic differential techniques (Michner & DeLamater, 1994: 151).

**Single item scale** is the use of one question to assess attitude, and it consists of positive or negative statement about the object. The respondent indicates whether he agrees or disagrees. An example of a single item scale used in this study is:

*I really enjoy learning English*

- *agree*
- *disagree*

The single item scale is easy to score and saves time. However, it is not very precise because it detects only gross differences in attitude.

**The Likert scale** consists of a series of statements about the object of interest. This type of measurement is used when one wants to know not only how each person feels about an object but also how each respondent's attitude compares with the attitude of others. The Likert scale has different items that should be counter balanced. That is, some items should be positive statements and others should be negative statements. In this study a respondent is required to rate each attitude item on a 5-point scale, for example:

*How often do you use English with your classmates outside class?*

- *Always*
- *Most of the time*
- *Sometimes*
- *Seldom*
- *Never*

**The semantic differential technique** consists of a number of dimensions on which the respondent rates the attitude object. It is a technique used for measuring connotative meaning. Its advantage is that researchers can compare the individual's attitude on three dimensions, allowing more complex differentiation among persons.

It can also be used with any object from a specific person to an entire nation (Michner & DeLamater, 1994: 151).

In this technique, learners are presented with a series of antonyms (for example, useful – useless, ugly – beautiful) and asked to evaluate the given phenomenon (a language or speaker's accent) on each dimension. This has been used in Matched Guise studies in which a speaker, who is bilingual, reads a passage in two languages and learners are then asked to make the judgement about the readers (without being told that it is the same person). In this way they inadvertently reveal their attitudes towards the two languages.

Attitude can also be indirectly measured by observing the overt behaviour of a person. The indirect method is, however, less reliable and less valid than the direct method. The reason is that most people respond honestly to direct questions even when questions involve sensitive topics as compared to indirect measurement (cf. Michner & DeLamater, 1994: 153). In this study, a questionnaire has been designed to measure the students' attitude and how it affects learning.

Gardner and Lambert (1972) used the direct measurement in their studies of attitudes among American students learning L2 French in the United States. Questions were devised to investigate learners' reasons for learning French, their degree of anomie (dissatisfaction with their role in society), their ethnocentrism, their preference for America over France and their attitudes towards French Americans.

In this study the researcher used both the single item scale and the Likert scale.

For this study, a questionnaire (cf. Appendix A) was designed to determine the following factors:

- Preferences in terms of the lecturer and teaching-learning methods and activities.
- Socio-economic factors that may influence students' attitudes.

- Students' attitude towards English culture and learning English.

#### **4.4 DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES**

The researcher used the students' regular double period to administer the questionnaire. Students were also advised to ask for assistance whenever it was necessary.

Initially students had problems with writing their names on the questionnaire, but the researcher informed them about the importance of writing their names on the questionnaire and assured them that their answers and results would be strictly confidential.

#### **4.5 ANALYSIS OF THE DATA**

The data were analysed by means of descriptive statistics (frequency counts) as well as qualitative analysis of students' responses.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS**

#### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

This chapter is devoted to the presentation and discussion of the results of the analysed data. In order to facilitate discussion, the results are presented under the following headings: College (the lecturer and lecturing), home circumstances (background, exposure to English), attitude towards English in society (attitude towards the English culture, and attitude towards learning English), and achievement as a factor that influences attitude.

#### **5.2 COLLEGE**

##### **5.2.1 The lecturer and lecturing**

###### **5.2.1.1 Like and dislike of English classes (Question 1)**

92% of the students indicated that they enjoyed the English class because their lecturer was friendly, made the class more interesting and had students' welfare at heart. Only 8% of the students responded that they did not enjoy the English class because the lecturer was strict, unfriendly and did not show any interest in the students' welfare. This shows that most students do enjoy their English class as a rule.

###### **5.2.1.2 Type of lecturer (Question 2)**

About 74% students preferred the lecturer who allowed them to work at their own pace, knew their needs and acknowledged that students have different learning styles. It seems that students need to be given enough time to learn on their own, as

they mentioned that English was difficult and they needed time to master and understand it.

### **5.2.1.3 Qualities of a lecturer (Question 3)**

Out of 50 students, 92% responded that they preferred a lecturer who always came to class well prepared. Students often become motivated if the lecturer comes to class being well prepared. 76% responded that the lecturer should always be friendly in order to create an environment conducive to learning. 32% indicated that the lecturer should be caring and sympathetic, and some (40%) responded that they liked a lecturer with a sense of humour.

### **5.2.1.4 Language proficiency (Question 4)**

70% expected their English lecturer to be as proficient in English as a mother tongue speaker, because he/she teaches English and is expected to be an expert in it (English). 25% indicated that they did not expect their lecturer to be fluent in English because English is his/her second language.

5% indicated that even though proficiency plays a vital role in language learning, it does not rule out the fact that a lecturer who is not proficient will not contribute towards learning. What is more important is to make students understand, learn the language and encourage them to learn and read widely in order to gain vocabulary.

36% responded that the lecturer sometimes stated objectives and only 30% indicated that objectives are always stated in class. 28% stated that for effective learning to take place, the lecturer needs to state learning objectives most of the time.

### **5.2.1.5 Use of English in and out of class (Questions 5, 6 & 7)**

88% of the students indicated that their lecturer always spoke English in and outside the classroom situation, but among students the use of English was minimal especially out of the classroom. 66% indicated that sometimes they spoke English in class. The fact that the lecturer always speaks English is encouraging because it serves as an extrinsic motivation to students (one hopes that students will in turn communicate in L2). Over 50% students mentioned that they used English sometimes for communication, especially among themselves. This seems to indicate that they have an interest in learning it; they needed to be encouraged to use English frequently in order to improve their communication skills.

### **5.2.1.6 Teaching Method (Question 12)**

About 78% students indicated that they preferred the use of the discussion method because this method also helped learners share ideas and get to know each other (cf. 3.2.1). Working with peers assisted the subjects in acting as independent learners. 34% preferred a question and answer method because they said it made them alert or ready to answer questions from the lecturer. Students also mentioned that the question and answer method compelled them to read in advance, so that they would be in a position to respond to questions in class.

The lecturing method is the least preferred method, although 14% students argued that this method enabled the lecturer to explain everything in detail. Generally, students do not want to sit and listen to the lecturer but they want to be involved during learning.

Although the discussion method is preferred by students, it is, however, difficult to apply in most of the colleges, given the number of students in class per lecturer. It is also difficult to arrange students in groups, because of the lack of space in ordinary classrooms. The limited time allocated per period also plays a role.

### **5.2.1.7 Teaching Aids (Question 15)**

The majority of students, about 98%, indicated that teaching aids helped them to remember the work easily, while 78% indicated that teaching aids made the class more interesting. 64% responded that teaching aids helped them to sustain attention and 50% indicated that teaching aids helped them to grasp the work with ease.

It seems that students enjoy the use of teaching aids at all times, but the problem is that many colleges lack resources to buy and store teaching aids. If one buys teaching aids, one often finds that there is no secure place to store them.

### **5.2.1.8 Learning objectives (Question 16)**

36% of the subjects responded that the lecturer stated objectives in the English class sometimes, whereas 30% indicated that objectives were always stated in class. Only 28% responded that the lecturer stated objectives most of the time. It seems that lecturer seldom stated learning objectives in class, and this made his/her lesson futile.

### **5.2.1.9 Group work (Questions 13 & 14)**

94% of the subjects preferred to work in groups because, according to them, group work built one's self-esteem. The subjects also mentioned that during group work they were able to share ideas, interact with peers, and learn to respect other people's views. Group work also created a relaxed atmosphere in the classroom.

50% indicated that they played different roles during group work and these roles were relevant tools that made learning more fun and interesting. Students indicated that another good thing about group work was that it encouraged passive learners to take an active role in the learning process. For example, some students wrote a report for the group, others gave an oral report and facilitated the discussion.

Some students specified that group work caused them to take charge of their learning, feel free when asking and answering questions, and recall what they had discussed, especially during examinations.

From the findings, it seems as if students prefer to work in groups because they learn to take initiative and think abstractly and the knowledge received from the group is not easily forgotten.

#### **5.2.1.10 Collaboration with and influence of peers (Questions 8, 9, 10 & 11)**

Students were also asked whether they discussed English work amongst themselves, and only 50% of the subjects responded that they sometimes discussed work amongst themselves. 34% mentioned that their classmates' positive opinions influenced their work sometimes. These influences helped them to improve their learning, to work harder and pass tests and have confidence in themselves. 90% indicated that they were not influenced by their peers' opinions.

From the study, it was clear that students did not always agree with negative resolutions taken at mass meetings, particularly resolutions that affected learning or progress in class.

#### **5.2.2. Summary of factors that influence students' attitude**

A summary of the most significant factors that positively influence the students' experience of lecturers and lecturing is given in Table 1 below.

**Table 1:** Factors influencing the students' experience of lecturers and lecturing.

<i>Students prefer a lecturer who:</i>	
1	has their welfare at heart.
2	allows them to work on their own pace.
3	knows their needs.
4	is a well-prepared lecturer.
5	is friendly.
6	is proficient in English.
7	speaks English in and outside the classroom situation.
8	lecture with teaching aids.
<i>Students prefer lectures which have the following characteristics:</i>	
9	Make use of group work.
10	Encourage students to discuss among themselves.
11	Encourage group work.
12	Aim at achieving objectives.
13	Expose them to different teaching styles.

Students at the college are regarded as adult learners, and most of them are mature, so they need to be encouraged to work independently. A lecturer who is friendly, well prepared and uses practical examples and teaching aids will be liked by his/her students. This is likely to have a positive effect on students' learning. He/she should also use different teaching methods in order to achieve the desired objective. These findings have definite implications for the training of lecturers (and teachers) of English.

## **5.3 HOME CIRCUMSTANCES**

### **5.3.1 Background (Questions 17, 18, 19, 20, 21, 22 & 23)**

46% of the subjects indicated that they stayed in the hostels, while 22% stayed with their families, that is, sisters, brothers and relatives. Only 18% stayed with one parent and 8% with both parents.

80% of their parents were still alive and only 20% were without both parents. From the findings, 62% of these parents always showed an interest in the progress of their children, while 24% of the parents only sometimes showed any interest in the progress of their children.

34% of their fathers were still working, while 66% were not. On the other hand, most mothers, that is, about 66%, were not working. According to the data, fathers did different types of work, like taxi drivers, farm labourers, security guards, clerks, cashiers, petrol attendants. About 8% were pensioners and only 2% were self-employed (shoemakers). The subjects' mothers included dressmakers, domestic workers, street vendors, farm workers, pensioners and housewives.

Only 6% had a college diploma, and 4% had Standard 7 up to 10. 58% of the subjects' fathers had Standard 6 or lower as the highest qualification. Only 4% of the subject's mother had a college diploma. 72% of their mothers had Standard 6 and lower as the highest qualification. None of their mothers had a high school qualification.

84% of students indicated that their parents funded their college education, and only 4% had loans. 76% of these students had electricity at home and only 24% were without electricity. Some also indicated that they had electricity for almost one year and others for ten years. Even though the place is still rural, most families have electricity.

Most students were staying in the hostel, so they had limited contact with their parents, and could not rely on any motivational support from their parents. At the same time, it was difficult for most parents to provide basic needs for their children because of their financial constraints.

The highest qualification of most parents is Standard 6 and lower. It is unrealistic to expect these parents to motivate their children to learn when they (parents) themselves are not educated. Students do not have a proper foundation from which they can build their future. This argument is generally accepted in the literature, which indicates that low socio-economic status hinders learners' progress because they are not inspired and motivated at home (cf. 3.3.). The only motivation they get is at the college; there is no link or continuity between the college and home.

Many parents are faced with the burden of paying for the college fee and they are often left with no money to buy books, magazines and newspapers for their children to read and thus obtain more exposure to English. Parents from a low socio-economic status generally believe that only the college fee is important, and that extra expenses for educational excursions, and buying of books and other relevant materials are a waste of money, and an unwelcome demand made on them by the college.

The majority of students indicated that they had electricity at home, but it must be borne in mind that it is an expensive resource to maintain, especially when one considers the poor socio-economic background of many parents. In rural areas, electricity is usually only used for radios and television sets (to listen to the radio and watch interesting programmes on television, especially Northern Sotho programmes). The fetching of firewood and drawing of water are still basic household chores that need to be done before and after lectures for day students.

## **5.3.2 Exposure to English**

### **5.3.2.1 Television (Questions 26, 27 & 28)**

72% of the subjects indicated that they had television at home and 20% mentioned that they had had it for 10 years, 16% had had it for 5 years, 10% had had it for 6 years, 4% for 15 years and another 4% for 17 years. It was found that 58% watched English programmes sometimes. 10% of the subjects always watched TV in their free time, and only 18% never watched TV.

### **5.3.2.2 Newspapers (Questions 29 & 32)**

52% of the students indicated that they sometimes read English newspapers, 26% indicated that they always read newspapers, while 18% read newspapers most of the time and 45% never read newspapers. Usually students do not leave the campus to go and buy newspapers; not every shop in the village sells them. The distance from the campus to the village also makes it difficult for them to walk such a long distance. Students rely on available transport (usually lecturers' cars) to buy newspapers. This also depends on whether a student has money to buy the paper or not. Sometimes the college library does keep newspapers (two days old newspapers) for students to read. Students end up reading "stale" or old news.

### **5.3.2.3 Magazines (Questions 30 & 33)**

48% of the subjects indicated that they sometimes read English magazines when they were still at school. 26% mentioned that they always read English magazines, while 18% indicated that they always read magazines at home even when they were at school. 58% mentioned that when they were at school, they sometimes read English magazines.

#### **5.3.2.4 Novels (Questions 31 & 34)**

Almost all students (99%) indicated that they read English novels in addition to those prescribed in their course and only 6% indicated that they never read English novels while they were at school, 36% said they always read novels even when they were at school.

From the findings it seems that most students were adequately exposed to English for a lengthy period (cf. 5.5), because they indicated that they had television set for 10 years, they read English novels in addition to their prescribed books, and 48% read English magazines sometimes. However, their English usage leaves much to be desired after all this exposure. It is clear that lecturers need to encourage students to read a lot, because it is only through reading that the learner is exposed to the many functions of the written language.

### **5.4 ATTITUDE TOWARDS ENGLISH IN SOCIETY**

#### **5.4.1 Attitude towards the English culture (Questions 35-43)**

Society also plays a role in influencing attitude towards the English culture. Results of the findings on attitude towards the English culture are given in Table 2, and results on attitude towards learning English are presented in Table 3.

**Table 2:** Attitude towards the English culture (Questions 35-43).

	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Dis- agree</i>
1. If South Africa should lose the English culture, it would be a great loss.	43	6
2. Most English South Africans are friendly and easy to get along, and South Africa is fortunate to have them.	48	2
3. English South Africans are sociable, warm heated and creative people.	47	3
4. I would like to know more of English South Africans.	50	0
5. The more I learn about English South Africans the less I like them.	16	34
6. English South Africans should not try to maintain their cultural identity.	17	32
7. English South Africans deserve no preferential treatment because of the way they treat other groups.	13	34
8. By promoting English to the exclusion of other languages, English South Africans have shown that they deserve less, not more consideration from the rest of South Africa.	11	39
9. The more I get to know English South Africans the more I want to be fluent in their language.	45	4

All students (100%) agreed that they would like to know more about English South Africans. 90% indicated that the more they got to know English South Africans, the more they wanted to be fluent in English. About 96% agreed that most English South Africans were friendly and easy to get along with, sociable and creative people.

About 86% agreed that should South Africa lose the English culture, it would be a great loss and 78% disagreed with the statement that English should be promoted to the exclusion of other languages because all languages are important.

68% of the subjects disagreed with the statement that English South Africans deserved no preferential treatment because of the way they treated other people. Students indicated that the more they learned about English South Africans, the more they liked them. About 62% agreed with the statement that English South Africans should always try to maintain their cultural identity.

It seems that most students believe that the English culture is an important one to be familiar with, and it does not deserve to be lost.

### 5.4.2 Attitude towards learning English

**Table 3:** Attitude towards learning English

	<i>Agree</i>	<i>Dis- agree</i>
10. I hate English.	0	50
11. Learning English is a waste of time.	2	48
12. I find the study of English very boring.	1	49
13. I really enjoy learning English.	50	0
14. I plan to learn as much English as possible.	50	0
15. When I finish this course, I shall give up English entirely because I am not interested.	2	48
16. English is really interesting.	50	0
17. I think that all South African schools should teach English.	47	3
18. I would like to speak fluently like first language speakers of English.	48	2
19. I love learning English.	50	0
20. It is not important for Black South Africans to learn English as a second language.	3	47

From Table 3 it can be seen that all 100% of students indicated that they did not hate English, while 96% disagreed with the fact that learning English was a waste of time. Another 96% indicated that they would never give up English after completion of the course. They all seemed to enjoy English and planned to learn as much English as possible because they felt it was a great language and they loved it.

96% agreed that they would like to speak English fluently like first language speaker of English. 94% indicated that all South African schools should teach English because of South Africa's position on multilingualism, and that it is important that Black South Africans should learn English as a second language.

98% of the students indicated that they did not find the study of English boring (cf. 5.2.1.1). This shows that students do not hate English, but they lack interaction with the English community. Lecturers should find ways to establish this contact. In order to become fluent in English, one needs to practise (speak) it. Because cultural information is always embodied in language, lecturers need to be aware that the teaching of English entails teaching both language and culture.

Students thus have a positive attitude towards the learning of English. This attitude, however, is not reflected in their achievement.

## **5.5 ACHIEVEMENT**

In this study it would seem that achievement in the second language is not related to attitude. Students who perform poorly and obtain low marks do not necessarily have a negative attitude towards English or vice versa.

About 38% of the subjects failed English at the end of 1998 academic year, that is, they got less than 50% (the pass mark), while 48% got an average mark, which was a mark between 50% and 59%. Only 14% got a mark between 60% and 69%, and 2% got 70%. This indicates that their performance in English can be regarded as being poor.

Although students seem to have a positive attitude towards English and the English culture, this does not necessarily mean that they will automatically achieve or obtain high marks in the language. There are other factors, like family or home factors (cf. 5.3), that might contribute towards their low achievement. The subjects did not seem

to be discouraged by their low achievement in English - their attitude towards the language seemed to remain positive.

It is generally expected that the correlation between attitude and achievement should be a strong one. This, however, is not the case with the subjects. Students have positive attitudes towards the lecturer and lecturing and towards society and yet they still get low marks. This confirms Ellis' (1994:199) statement that the relationship between attitudes and action (i.e. achievement) is not a strong one (cf. 2.2).

## **5.6 CONCLUSION**

Tlale (1991:17) argues that in the classroom situation, learners struggle to speak English with confidence and are also subjected to dubious teaching methods – they are often taught to memorise language structures such as prepositions, tenses, synonyms in isolation and not within context. It is difficult for these students to construct isolated pieces of language into a meaningful whole. From the findings, it is clear that students prefer discussions, group work, and a variety of teaching-learning activities. They also prefer a lecturer who is friendly and cares for them. Students are likely to achieve better results when objectives are clearly stated. When the lecturer prepares himself/herself thoroughly, he/she will structure the learning content in such a way that different teaching and learning styles are employed, and this is also likely to improve students' achievement. The lecturer and the methods and activities he/she employs remain an important variable in the training of teachers at a college of education.

In this study there was no significant relationship between attitude and achievement. Student's positive attitude does not necessarily correlate with his/her achievement in English. Factors such as teaching-learning methods, mentioned above, and home circumstances may play a significant role here. Students generally come from poor socio-economic backgrounds, and many of the reasons for their poor performance are likely to be found there.

There should be a strong relationship between the college, the home and the society in which students find themselves. The students' positive attitude towards English should be exploited, so that their achievement can be improved. The impression that this study leaves is that this is not done. There thus remains a lot to be done.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

#### **6.1 CONCLUSION**

The purpose of this research project was to determine factors influencing attitude towards English at college level. According to Ellis (1985: 119), students' progress is influenced by the desire to do well in English as a subject and to learn more about the English culture. The successful learners will be those who are motivated and who have a positive attitude towards learning English as a second language.

The lecturer plays an important role in the teaching-learning situation. His/her personality, qualities, proficiency and method of teaching/lecturing contribute to the students' attitude towards English. According to the findings, students prefer a lecturer who is friendly, caring and has their welfare at heart, uses a variety of teaching methods and teaching aids, and who states objectives clearly. Students also like a lecturer with a sense of humour. All these factors will contribute to a positive attitude towards English.

Home circumstances also play an important role in shaping and influencing attitude towards English. High socio-economic status families motivate their children by buying them books, novels, television sets and other means that would expose their children to English and its culture, whereas those from low socio-economic status do not have these privileges. A low socio-economic background influences learning negatively. Parents do not possess the knowledge or skills to assist their children and thus contribute to their children's learning. They often take no interest in the child's school or college work. These learners have a limited exposure to English. This state of affairs is not surprising in situations where a lot of time and energy must be spent on basic survival.

In most cases, language learning results from experience in communicating in the second language. It is evident from this study that students want to interact with English speaking people and to get to know them. English is regarded as a powerful asset. Although students like English culture, they do not want it to be given preferential treatment at the expense of other languages. They want to know English well and be fluent in it, that is, like first language speakers.

The subjects' achievement in English is not closely related to their attitude towards the language. A large number of students achieved low marks in their English course, but their attitude towards English remained positive. It is thus evident that, although students have a positive attitude towards English, their achievement is generally poor. This is an area of concern. Factors other than attitude must account for their poor performance. Home circumstances and background may have an influence on achievement.

It is clear that colleges of education need to make special provision to exploit the positive attitude students have to English and thus ensure better achievement. Colleges need to ensure that lecturers and lecturing are effective in terms of what has been found in this study. Colleges also need to find ways to make up for the lack of background and knowledge that students have. It is important that colleges should supplement their present English courses. These courses must contain not only a remedial component, but must also enrich and widen students' experience of English and its culture.

## **6.2 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH**

Research should be done on the supplementation and enrichment of courses at colleges of education. The problem of students who lack the necessary background is a widespread one, and research in this area will be a of vital importance for an improvement in the education system in South Africa.

Research also needs to be done to identify those factors that would play a role in improving students' achievement. The amount of effort and persistence of students during language lessons can also be investigated.

Even though literature confirms that there is a significant correlation between attitude and achievement, in this study, the opposite is true. There is no significant correlation between attitude and achievement (cf. Ellis, 1994:99). Therefore, a research needs to be conducted into the correlation between attitude and achievement at colleges (especially rural colleges) of education.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

- ALATIS, J.E., STERN, H.H., & PETER, S. 1983. Applied Linguistics and the Preparation of Second Language Teachers: Toward a Rationale. Georgetown University Round Table on Languages and Linguistics. Washington, D.C: Georgetown University Press.
- BALL, S. 1977. Motivation in Education. New York: Academic Press.
- BARRET, P.M. 1996. Family Treatment of Childhood Anxiety: A Controlled Trial. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology* 64 (2): 333-342.
- BEEBE, L. 1983. Risk-taking and the Language Learner. In Seliger, H.W. & Long, M.H. (eds.). Classroom-oriented Research in Second Language Acquisition. London: Newbury House.
- BLYTHE-LORD, R. 1991. The Educational Media Design Handbook. London: MacMillan Education.
- BOGGIANO, A.K. & PITTMAN, S.T. 1992. Achievement and Motivation: a Social-development Perspective. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- BRANFORD, W. 1996. English in South African Society: A Preliminary View. In De Klerk, V (ed.). Focus on South Africa. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.
- BROWN, H.D. 1987. Principles of Language Learning and Teaching. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall.
- BROWN, H.D. 1994. Second Edition. Principles of Language Learning and Teaching. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall Regents.

- BYNNER, J. & ROMNEY, D. 1981. Use of the Semantic Differential in Bilingualism Research and its Relevance to Translation. *Translator's Journal* 26 (3): 229-243.
- CHAPMAN, E.N. 1990. *Attitude: Your Most Priceless Possession*. Menlo Park: Crisp Publications.
- CHAPMAN, E.N. 1992. *Stay Positive: Is All a Matter of Attitude*. London: Kogan Page.
- CHIDOLUE, M.E. 1996. The Relationship between the Teacher Characteristics, Learning Environment and Student Achievement and Attitude. *Studies in Educational Evaluation* 22 (3): 263-274.
- CHITRAPU, D.S. 1996. *A Case Study of Non-native Graduate Students: Research Writing in the Disciplines*. Pennsylvania: Indiana University.
- CRISMORE, A., NGEOW, K., & SOO, K. 1996. Attitude towards English in Malaysia. *World Englishes* 15(3): 319-335.
- CROSS, G.R. 1974. *The Psychology of Learning: an Introduction for Students of Education*. Oxford: Pergamon Press.
- DEWAELE, J.M. 1996. Variation in the Composition of the Lexicon of Oral Styles. *IRAL – International Journal of Applied Linguistics* 34 (4): 261 – 282.
- DEWAELE, J.M. & FURNHAM, A. 1999. Extraversion: The Unloved Variable in Applied Linguistic Research. *Language Learning* 49 (3): 509-544.
- DORNYEI, Z. 1994. Motivation and Motivating in the Foreign Language Classroom. *Modern Language Journal* 78 (2): 273-284.

- DREYER, C. 1995. Identifying English Second Language Learning Problems in Multilingual Classroom at University. *Journal for Language Teaching* 29 (4): 285-296.
- DULAY, H., BURT, M. & KRASHEN, S. 1982. *Language Two*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- DWYER, C. A. 1982. Achievement Testing. *Encyclopaedia of Educational Research*. New York: Macmillan.
- ELLIS, R. 1985. *Understanding Second Language Acquisition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- ELLIS, R. 1994. *The Study of Second Language Acquisition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- ELY, C. M. 1986. An Analysis of Discomfort, Risk taking, Sociability and Motivation in Second Language Classroom. *Language Learning* 36: 1-25.
- ENGELBRECHT, P., KRIEGEL, S.M. & BOOYSEN, M.I. 1996. *Perspectives on Learning Difficulties*. Pretoria: Van Schaik.
- EZEWU, E. 1983. *Sociology of Education*. London: Longman.
- GARDNER, R.C. 1985. *Social Psychology and Second Language Learning: The Role of Attitudes and Motivation*. London: Edward Arnold.
- GARDNER, R.C. & LAMBERT, W.E. 1959. Motivational Variables in Second Language Acquisition. *Canadian Journal of Psychology* 13 (4): 266-272.
- GARDNER, R.C. & LAMBERT, W.E. 1972. *Attitude and Motivation in Second Language Learning*. Rowley, Mass. : Newbury House.

- GARDNER, R.C. & MACINTYRE, P.D. 1992. A Student's Contributions to Second Language Learning. Part I: Cognitive Variables. *Language Teaching* 25 (4): 211-220.
- GARDNER, R.C. & MACINTYRE, P.D. 1993a. A Student's Contribution to Second Language Learning. Part II: Affective Variables. *Language Teaching* 26 (1): 1-11.
- GARDNER, R.C. & SMYTHE, P.D. 1975. Second Language Acquisition: a Social Psychological Approach. Research Bulletin No. 332. Department of Psychology. Ontario: University of Western Ontario.
- GARDNER, R.C., SMYTHE, P.C. & CLEMENT, R. 1979. Intensive Second Language Study in a Bicultural Milieu: An Investigation of Attitudes, Motivation and Language Proficiency. *Language Learning* 29 (2): 305-321.
- GREENHALGH, P. 1994. Emotional Growth and Learning. London: Routledge.
- HERBST, H. 1988. Second Language Teaching: A Guide for Junior Primary Students and Teachers. Pretoria: Human & Rousseau.
- HORWITZ, E. 1986. Preliminary Evidence for Reliability and Validity of a Foreign Language Anxiety Scale. *TESOL Quarterly* 20 (4): 559-562.
- KINDLER, H.S. 1990. Risk Taking: A Guide to Decision Makers. Menlo Park: Crisp Publications
- KRASHEN, S. 1981. Aptitude and Attitude in Relation to Second Language Acquisition and Learning. In DILLER, K. C., (ed.). Individual Differences and Universals in Language Learning Aptitude. Rowley, MA.:Newbury House.
- KRASHEN, S.D. 1982. Principles and Practice in Second Language Acquisition. Oxford: Pergamon Press.

KRASHEN, S.D. 1985. *Input Hypothesis: Issues and Implications*. London: Longman.

KRUMBOLTZ, J.D. 1965. *Learning and the Educational Process: Selected Papers from the Research Conference on Learning and the Educational Process held at Stanford University*. Chicago: Rand McNally.

LITTLEWOOD, W.T. 1984. *Foreign and Second Language Learning: Language Acquisition Research and its Implications for the Classroom*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

MACINTYRE, P.D. 1995. How does Anxiety affect Second Language Learning: A reply to Sparks and Ganschow. *Modern Language Journal* 19 (1): 90-99.

McCORMICK, C.B. & PRESSLEY, M. 1997. *Educational Psychology: Learning, Instruction, Assessment*. London: Longman.

MICHNER, H.A. & DELAMATER, J.D. 1994. *Social Psychology*. New York: Harcourt Brace College Publishers.

MORGAN, C. 1993. Teaching Culture at "A" Level. *Language Learning Journal* 7: 42-44.

MOYO, T. 1997. Are the Current High School Literature Texts of Relevance to the Culture of ESL Learners? *Journal for Language Teaching* 31 (1): 42-49.

MUTHUKRISHNA, N. 1994. Student Motivation. *SAALD Newsletter* (13) 2: 14-16.

PHILLIPS, L. 1992. Relationships of Expectations, Goals and Activities to Student Achievement among Minority, Socio-economic and Gender Groups. Paper

presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Educational Research Association.  
San Francisco: American Educational Research Foundation.

PIENAAR, W.D. & SPOELSTRA, H.I.J. 1991. Negotiation: Theories, Strategies and Skills. Cape Town: Juta.

POWELL, S.B. 1993. The Power of Positive Peer Influence: Leadership Training for Today's Teens. *Special Services in the Schools* 18 (1): 119-136.

SCHUMANN, J.H. 1975. Affective Factors and the Problem of Age in Second Language Acquisition. *Language Learning* 25 (2): 209-233.

SCHUNK, D.H. 1990. Goal Setting and Self Efficacy during Self-regulated Learning. *Educational Psychologist* 15 (1): 71-86.

SCHWARZER, R. 1992. Self-efficacy: Thought Control of Action. London: Hemisphere.

SKEHAN, P. 1990. Individual Differences in Second Language Learning. London: Edward Arnold.

SMIT, U. 1996. A New English for a New South Africa: Language Attitudes, Language Planning and Education. Vienna: Braumüller.

SPARK, R.L. & GANSCHOW, L. 1991. Foreign Language Learning Differences: Affective or Native Language Aptitude Differences. *Modern Language Journal* 75: 3-16.

SPIELBERGER, C.D., GORSUCH, R.L. & LUSHENE, R.E. 1970. Manual for the State-trust Anxiety Inventory. Palo Alto: Consulting Psychologist Press.

- STERN, H. 1983. *Fundamental Concepts of Language Teaching*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- STIPEK, D.J. 1988. *Motivation to Learn: from Theory to Practice*. Englewood Cliffs: Prentice Hall.
- SWAP, S.M. 1993. *Developing Home-social Partnerships from Concepts to Practice*. New York: Teachers' College Press.
- TLALE, C.C.M. 1991. The Causes of Scholastic Underachievement. *Educamus* 37: (5): 18-18.
- VAN DER WALT, I. 1997. *The Relationship between Personality Components and ESL Proficiency*. Unpublished Doctoral Dissertation. Potchefstroom: Potchefstroom University for CHE.
- VOGEL, K. & VOGEL, S. 1986. Interlanguage and the Personality of the Learner. *IRAL – International Journal of Applied Linguistics* 24 (1): 48-68.
- VREY, J.D. 1979. *The Self-Actualising Educand*. Pretoria: University of South Africa.
- WILKINS, D.A. 1974. *Second Language Learning and Teaching*. London: Edward Arnold.
- WOLFENDALE, S. 1992. *Empowering Parents and Teachers*. London: Cassel Villiers House.
- YAPASAK, R., ROODIN, P.A. & VAUGHT, G.M. 1978. Effects of Extraversion, Anxiety and Sex on Children's Verbal Fluency and Coding Task Performance. *The Journal of Psychology* 100 (1): 49-55.

YOUSEF, B. 1989. Students' Attitudes to the Literature Component in University English Language Courses. *British Journal of Language Learning* 27(3): 163-166.

## **APPENDIX**

# ATTITUDE QUESTIONNAIRE FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS

Your answers to all the questions will be strictly confidential and your help in providing this important information is greatly appreciated.

NAME : \_\_\_\_\_  
YEAR OF STUDY : \_\_\_\_\_  
COURSE : \_\_\_\_\_

## SECTION A

1. Do you enjoy your English class?

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>

1.1. If so, why do you enjoy your English classes?

- the lecturer is friendly
- the lecturer has our welfare at heart
- the lecturer has a sense of humour
- the English class is interesting
- the atmosphere is relaxed
- other (specify)

<input type="checkbox"/>

1.2. If not, why do you dislike / not enjoy your English classes? Tick as many as you wish:

- the lecturer is unfriendly
- the lecturer is too strict
- the lecturer does not have our welfare at heart
- the lecturer does not have a sense of humour
- the class is not interesting
- the atmosphere is not relaxed

<input type="checkbox"/>

- other (specify)

2. What type of lecturer do you prefer?. Tick as many as you wish. The lecturer who...

- allows you to work on your own
- allows you to work at your own pace
- knows his / her students' needs
- gives individual attention
- acknowledges that learners have different learning styles
- other (specify)

3. What do you regard as the most important qualities of a college lecturer? Tick as many as you like:

- Friendliness
- Humour
- Well prepared
- Motivates students
- Caring
- Sympathetic
- Other (specify)

4.1. Do you expect your lecturer to be as proficient in English as a mother tongue speaker of English? 

Yes	<input type="checkbox"/>
No	<input type="checkbox"/>

4.2. Give reasons for your answer.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. Does your lecturer speak English in the English classes?

- Always
- Most of the time
- Sometimes
- Seldom
- Never


6. How often do you speak English in class with your classmates?

- Always
- Most of the time
- Sometimes
- Seldom
- Never


7. How often do you speak English with your classmates outside class?

- Always
- Most of the time
- Sometimes
- Seldom
- Never


8.1. Do you like working with classmates in a group in class?

Yes	
No	

8.2. Give reasons for your answer.

---



---



---

9.1. Do you discuss English work with your classmates?

- Always
- Most of the time
- Sometimes
- Seldom
- Never


9.2. If so, do their opinions influence you in your work?

- Always
- Most of the time
- Sometimes
- Seldom
- Never


9.3. If so, describe how they influence your work.

---



---



---

10.1. If some of your classmates should tell you that a lecturer's demands are unreasonable, would you listen to them?

Yes	
No	

10.2. If so, would you not do homework or an assignment as a result?

Yes	
No	

11. If some of your friends should say that they don't like English, would you agree with them?

Yes	
No	

12.1. Which method of teaching do you prefer in your English classes at the college?

- Lecturing method
- Question and answer method
- Discussion method
- Demonstration method
- Other (specify)


12.2. Give reasons for your answer.

---



---



---

13.1. According to you, does group work have any advantages?

Yes	
No	

13.2. If so, what are the advantages? Tick as many as you wish.

- it encourages self confidence
- it creates a relaxed atmosphere
- it encourages peer support and respect
- it encourages interaction among students
- other (specify)


14.1. Do you play an active role in group work sessions?

- Always
- Most of the time
- Sometimes
- Seldom
- Never


14.2. If so, what active roles have you performed in the group?

- I have written the report of the group
- I have given the report orally
- I have facilitated
- Other (please specify)


15. To what extent does the use of teaching aid assist you? Tick or mention only three (3).

- they help to sustain attention
- they make the class more interesting
- they help us grasp the work with ease
- they help us not to forget easily
- other (specify)


16. Does the lecturer state objectives in the English class?

- Always
- Most of the time
- Sometimes
- Seldom
- Never


## SECTION B

17. Where do you stay?

- with both my parents
- with one of my parents
- with my family (brothers, sisters, relatives)
- in the hostel
- with friends


- other (specify)

--

18.1. Are both or either of your parents still alive?

Yes	
No	

18.2. If so, do your parents show any interest in your college progress?

- Always
- Most of the time
- Sometimes
- Seldom
- Never


19.1. Does your father work?

Yes	
No	
N/A	

19.2. If so, what type of work does he do?

---

---

---

20.1. Does your mother work?

Yes	
No	
N/A	

20.2. If so, what type of work does she do?

---

---

---

21. What are / were your father's highest qualifications?

- Std. 6 or lower
- Std. 7 or 8
- Std. 9
- Std. 10
- College diploma
- Technikon diploma
- University degree
- Other (specify)


22. What are / were your mother's highest qualifications?

- Std. 6 or lower
- Std. 7 or 8
- Std. 9
- Std. 10
- College diploma
- Technikon diploma
- University degree
- Other (specify)


23. How is your college education funded?

- Parents pay
- Bursaries
- Loan
- Other (specify)


24. Do you have electricity at home?

Yes	
No	

25. If so, for how long have you had electricity? \_\_\_\_\_

26. Do you have a television set at home?

Yes	
No	

27. If so, for how long have you had a television set? \_\_\_\_\_

28. How often do you watch English programmes of TV?

- Always
- Most of the time
- Sometimes
- Seldom
- Never


29. Do you read English newspapers?

- Always
- Most of the time
- Sometimes
- Seldom
- Never


30. Do you read English magazines?

- Always
- Most of the time
- Sometimes
- Seldom
- Never


31. Do you read English novels (in addition to those prescribed in your course)?

Yes	
No	

32. Did you read English newspapers at home while you were at school?

- Always
- Most of the time
- Sometimes
- Seldom
- Never


33. Did you read English magazines at home while you were at school?

- Always
- Most of the time
- Sometimes
- Seldom
- Never


34. Did you read English novels in addition to those prescribed while you were at school?

- Always
- Most of the time
- Sometimes
- Seldom
- Never


### SECTION C

Say whether you agree / disagree with the following statements. Circle the answer.

35.	If South Africa should lose the English culture, it would be a great loss.	Agree	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
36.	Most English South Africans are so friendly and easy to get along, with that, South Africa is fortunate to have them.	Agree	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
37.	English South Africans are very sociable, warm hearted and creative people.	Agree	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
38.	I would like to know more English South Africans.	Agree	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
39.	The more I learn more about English South Africans, the less I like them.	Agree	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
40.	English South Africans should not try to maintain their cultural identity.	Agree	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
41.	English South Africans deserve not preferential treatment of the way they treat groups.	Agree	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
42.	By promoting English to the exclusion of other languages, English South Africans have shown that they deserve less, not more consideration from the rest of South Africa.	Agree	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
43.	The more I get to know English South Africans, the more I want to be fluent in their language.	Agree	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
44.	I hate English.	Agree	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
45.	Learning English is a waste of time.	Agree	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
46.	I find study of English very boring.	Agree	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
47.	I really enjoy learning English.	Agree	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
48.	I plan to learn as much English as possible.	Agree	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
49.	When I finish this course, I shall give up the study of English entirely, because I am not interested.	Agree	<input type="checkbox"/>
		Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
50.	English is really interesting	Agree	<input type="checkbox"/>

51. Because of South Africa's position on multilingualism, I think that all South African schools should teach English.
52. I would like to speak fluently like first language speakers of English.
53. I love learning English.
54. It is not important for black South Africans to learn English as the second language.

Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
Agree	<input type="checkbox"/>
Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
Agree	<input type="checkbox"/>
Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>
Agree	<input type="checkbox"/>
Disagree	<input type="checkbox"/>