

ATTITUDES OF SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNERS WITH PARTICULAR REFERENCE TO UNDERGRADUATES OF SABARAGAMUWA UNIVERSITY OF SRI LANKA AND UVA WELLISSA UNIVERSITY OF SRI LANKA

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Attitudes, among various other factors, play a major role in the process of second language (L2) learning. Attitudes are “the individual’s reaction to anything associated with the immediate context in which the language is taught” (Masgoret and Gardner, 2003). According to Baker and Jones (1998), while on the one hand, if someone has a positive attitude towards learning a L2, they may well succeed in becoming proficient in that language and also at the end of the learning process, a desired outcome may be there for students who have positive attitudes towards the L2. On the other hand, unfavorable experiences may result in negative attitudes and this in turn may result in poor learning performance (Kitano, 2001). Thus, it is evident that attitudes are significant in L2 learning and learners who have positive attitudes learn more and learners who learn well acquire positive attitudes. Hence, the present study investigates the learners’ attitudes towards learning English as a L2 and attempts to ascertain whether learners’ attitudes differ in terms of the geographical area that they are coming from and/or whether attitudes differ in terms of the grades they have earned and/or whether attitudes differ according to their learning environments.

Accordingly, to achieve these prime objectives 69 first year undergraduates were selected from Uva Wellissa University (UWU) in addition to 110 second year undergraduates from University of Sabaragamuwa (SUSL) using simple random sampling method. In addition to semi structured interviews and class room observations, data were collected mainly by questionnaires designed on a five-point Likert-scale adopting items from Gardner (1985) and Clément et al.’s questionnaires (1994). Statistical test of Kruskal Wallis, Crosstabs and Pearson Chi-square were computed for the purposes of analysis.

The study revealed that in both universities over 80% of the learners show positive attitudes towards learning English and discovered that the attitudes do not differ on account of a learner’s geographical area, or grades earned, or learning environments. Finally it is suggested and recommended that to improve the positive attitudes towards L2 learning, the country’s language policy and planning should consider the learners’ attitudes as an integral and important aspect even in developing English language curricula, English text books, and in giving exposure to the target culture.