

THE CORRELATION  
BETWEEN MOTIVATION AND ENGLISH LANGUAGE ACHIEVEMENT  
AMONG UPPER SECONDARY SCHOOL PUPILS

ZAHUREN BINTI ABDUL KADIR

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Special dedications to my beloved mother, husband and family, who have always supported me in any ways possible through the ups and downs during this extraterrestrial journey, and to all important souls in my life.



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PTTA UTHM  
PERPUSTAKAAN TUNKU TUN AMINAH

## ABSTRACT

Motivation is one of the important elements in learning a second language, as of this study, English. Various programmes and improvements are carried out on English subject in Malaysian schools aiming at producing pupils who are fluent in English after they graduate from schools as embedded in the Malaysia Blueprint Education 2013 – 2025. However, the mastery of English has not yet achieved the satisfactory level based on studies carried out globally and through public examinations. Therefore, this study aims to examine the correlation of motivation on English language achievement among pupils in Seremban, Negeri Sembilan ( $n=445$ ). This study used Dörnyei's (2005) L2MSS Theory and questionnaire developed by Dörnyei's (2005) too. The data obtained was analysed using SPSS version 26. Learning Experience ( $M=4.035$ ,  $SD = 0.942$ ) was the highest type of motivation among pupils in Seremban followed by Ideal L2 Self ( $M=3.853$ ,  $SD = 0.899$ ) and Ought-to L2 Self ( $M=3.6355$ ,  $SD = 0.885$ ). The data obtained was also analysed using the Mann-Whitney U. Statistically, there was no significant difference between gender and pupil's achievement based on the three components in L2MSS ( $r < .05$ ). Only Learning Experience ( $r^s = -0.176$ ,  $p = .001$ ) exhibited correlation with pupil's achievement, whereby Ideal L2 Self ( $r^s = -0.296$ ,  $p = .001$ ) dan *Ought-to L2 Self* ( $r^s = -0.068$ ,  $p = .155$ ) did not have any correlation. Thus, teachers need to motivate pupils in learning English. More studies could be done towards various types of Malaysian schools using instruments developed to suit the local pupils.

## ABSTRAK

Motivasi merupakan salah satu elemen penting dalam mempelajari bahasa kedua iaitu dalam konteks kajian ialah bahasa Inggeris. Terdapat pelbagai program serta penambahbaikan yang dijalankan ke atas mata pelajaran bahasa Inggeris di sekolah-sekolah di seluruh negara bertujuan untuk melahirkan para pelajar yang fasih berbahasa Inggeris setelah mereka tamat persekolahan seperti yang termaktub di dalam *Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025*. Walau bagaimanapun, penguasaan bahasa Inggeris di kalangan pelajar belum lagi mencapai tahap yang baik berdasarkan kajian yang dijalankan di peringkat global dan peperiksaan awam di dalam negara. Oleh itu, kajian ini bertujuan untuk melihat korelasi motivasi dengan pencapaian dalam bahasa Inggeris di kalangan murid-murid sekolah menengah di daerah Seremban, Negeri Sembilan ( $n=445$ ). Kajian ini menggunakan teori motivasi Dörnyei (2005) iaitu *Second Language Learning Motivation Self-system* (L2MSS) dan seterusnya menggunakan soal selidik juga dibangunkan oleh Dörnyei (2005). Data yang diperolehi dianalisis menggunakan *Statistical Package for the Social Sciences* (SPSS) versi 26. Item *Learning Experience* ( $M=4.035$ ,  $SD=0.942$ ) merupakan jenis motivasi tertinggi di kalangan murid-murid di Seremban diikuti oleh *Ideal L2 Self* ( $M=3.853$ ,  $SD=0.899$ ) dan *Ought-to L2 Self* ( $M=3.6355$ ,  $SD=0.885$ ). Data turut dianalisis menggunakan ujian Mann-Whitney U. Secara statistiknya, tidak terdapat perbezaan signifikan antara jantina dan pencapaian berdasarkan komponen-komponen di dalam L2MSS ( $r < .05$ ). Hanya satu komponen L2MSS iaitu *Learning Experience* ( $r^s = -0.176$ ,  $p = .001$ ) mempunyai korelasi dengan pencapaian murid manakala dua lagi komponen L2MSS tidak mempunyai korelasi dengan pencapaian murid iaitu *Ideal L2 Self* ( $r^s = -0.296$ ,  $p = .001$ ) dan *Ought-to L2 Self* ( $r^s = -0.068$ ,  $p = .155$ ). Guru-guru perlu memotivasikan murid-murid dalam mempelajari bahasa English. Oleh itu, dicadangkan agar lebih banyak kajian perlu dilakukan di kalangan jenis-jenis sekolah berbeza yang terdapat di Malaysia menggunakan instrumen yang sesuai dengan murid-murid di negara ini.

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**LIST OF SYMBOLS AND ABBREVIATION**

CEFR	-	The Common European Framework of Reference
ILS	-	Ideal L2 Self
L2	-	Second language
L2MSS	-	Second Language Motivational Self-System
LE	-	Learning Experience
MBMMBI	-	Memartabatkan Bahasa Malaysia, Memperkukuhkan Bahasa Inggeris
OTS	-	Ought-to L2 Self
PT3	-	Pentaksiran Tingkatan 3
PPSMI	-	The Teaching and Learning of Mathematic and Science in English
SBELC	-	The Standard-Based English Language Curriculum for Secondary School
SPM	-	Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia



## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Research background

Historically, English was first brought to Malaysia by the British colonial authorities in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century. The British Government introduced this language and ever since then, the use and the importance of English in our country had undergone many phases and changes. There are three important stages in looking at the changes in the language in the context of Malaysian education, which are the pre-independence era, the post-independence era and, the present and future.

##### *Pre-Independence (before 1957)*

Before 1957 (pre-independence era), religious schools were the form of education. Pupils were taught the Al-Quran and the hadith and everything related to Islam. As the British arrived, they set up English medium primary and secondary schools. When the English language medium schools were founded in urban areas, the learners were promised opportunities for further education, employment in the civil service, and access to scholarships (Darmi and Albion, 2013). At this time, Malaya was facing the growth of the tin and rubber industry that resulted in the entrance of a massive amount of immigrants from China and India to work in these fields. As they were large in number, there was a need to establish their schools that used their mother tongues as the medium of instruction. Other than the religious schools for the Malays, the British also set up Primary Malay medium schools to offer secular education. There were different schools for the Chinese, Indian, and Malay, and the education system in that era did not have the standard curriculum to be used in all types of schools.

In 1967, when Malaysia was established with the joining of two states, Sabah and Sarawak, English continued to be used as an official language, and it was also a medium of instruction in national-type English schools (Yamaguchi & Deterding, 2016). As Malaya was moving to independence, the Government of Malaya at that time realised the need to establish a sense of identity among the citizens as early as the young people and this could be achieved through a society that was loyal to the nation and most importantly, a society that shared the same common goals and aspiration (Rajaretnam and Nalliah, 1999). The best medium was the school. Thus, The Razak Report, which was released in 1956 after a committee was set up to achieve the aforementioned aspiration, laid a few recommendations:

- Malay would be the medium of instruction in the national school system
- Malay and English were compulsory to be taught in schools. The aim was to make Malay the national language of the country and English as a stepping-stone for more job opportunities and higher education.
- A common content syllabus regardless of the medium of instruction in all schools was introduced to manoeuvre the country to a Malaysian outlook.
- The National Education Policy was to be implemented in ten years period of time.

English became a must-be-taught subject in all schools to serve the purpose that no secondary school pupil should be at a disadvantage in the matter either of employment or higher education (Report of the Education Committee, 1956).

#### *Post-Independence to 1970*

Based on the recommendation of the Razak Report, the National Education Policy was set out. It was embedded in Education Ordinance 1957. In 1960, the policy was revised and the Education Review Committee chaired by the late Abdul Rahman bin Talib, the Minister of Education at that time, released the Rahman Talib Report. There were some recommendations proposed:

- The recommendations of the Razak Report were upheld.

- The Malay and English languages were used as the medium of education to promote unity among all the different races in Malaysia.
- Pupils who came from vernacular primary schools had to attend a 'remove' class that would help them to learn English or Malay subjects for one extra year.

This brought about the Education Act 1961 where the Malay language became the medium of instruction in national schools. English had now become the second language in the country (Education Act 1961). From 1961 to 1970, there were some scenarios worth noting concerning the English language (Foo & Richards, 2004) :

- There was no standardised content syllabus for English subject though the teaching of English was made compulsory. There were two different syllabuses for the national type English schools and the non-English medium schools respectively.
- There were two different syllabuses used in the secondary schools and they were two English language examination papers offered for national type of schools and national schools.
- From 1968 onwards, the National Education Policy was gradually implemented. National type English schools were slowly changed into national schools phrases by phrases but the national type of Tamil and Chinese primary schools were maintained. For primary 1, only mathematics and science subjects were taught in English and the rest were taught in the national language, Malay.

#### *The 1970s to 1990s*

National type English schools were finally converted to national schools starting with the Primary 1 that year. At that time, the examination paper for the subject was the same for all schools as there was now a common content syllabus for English subject both in primary and secondary schools. Though all schools used the same syllabus for English, the subject was only introduced in Standard Three for the national type Chinese and Tamil primary schools (Foo & Richards, 2004).

The teaching of English had undergone many changes since then. The importance of the language for job opportunities and higher education led to the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) based syllabus in 1974. In keeping with the Education Enactment Bill 1971, the Malay language took place as the medium of instruction replacing English in 1970 in schools. However, the enhancement of the role of Bahasa Malaysia and the reduction of the role of English led to an imbalance where there was a decrease in the amount of English for pupils which eventually led to the changes in nature and development in the aforementioned language.

Thus, the Education Policy was rerevised by the Cabinet Committee in 1979 aimed to rectify its implementation to produce a united and disciplined society that could fulfill the trained manpower to achieve the development of the country at that time (National Education Policy 2017). This led to the revamping of the national school curriculum in 1989 (Kurikulum Baru Sekolah Rendah and Kurikulum Baru Sekolah Menengah). These were the new English curriculums for both primary and secondary schools in Malaysia.

#### *2000 and beyond*

English continued to be taught in schools to empower the pupils to use the language for job opportunities and preparing them for higher education. In the KBSM Kurikulum Baru Sekolah Menengah) curriculum, minor literature component was introduced to the curriculum. This aimed to ensure the pupils were involved in a more advanced English text and at the same time they would be able to obtain wider knowledge. Other than to broaden the pupils' English language proficiency in order to meet their needs to retain certain situations in everyday life, the aimed of learning the English language was for knowledge acquisition, and for future needs in the workplace (Secondary English Syllabus (KBSM), 2001). It was also aimed to 'further equip the pupils with English language proficiency so the pupils were able to use the language in everyday life situation, to acquire knowledge through the English language and for future workplace need' (Sukatan Pelajaran Kurikulum Bersepadu Sekolah Menengah Bahasa Inggeris, 2000, p.2).

There had been other policies pertaining the English language introduced in the education system since then. The PPSMI (Teaching and Learning Science and Mathematics) for all primary and secondary national schools, Tamil National



Schools, and all form 6 pupils was implemented in 2003. This was due to the fact that Science and Mathematics were the dynamic fields of knowledge with a variety of discoveries and most new information related to these subjects was in English through various media. The final aim of this policy was to enable pupils to access related Science and Mathematics information. Thus, they were able to master these fields and were more competitive at the international level. In addition, it was aimed to produce a generation who was fluent in the English language. 2003 until 2007 marked the bilingual of all public examination papers for Science and Mathematics subjects. Candidates were allowed to choose one or both of the languages. Starting in 2008, UPSR (Ujian Penilaian Sekolah Rendah) in all primary national schools and Tamil National Schools were using only English in the public examination for Science and Mathematics subjects and this applied to all public examinations for Science and Mathematics subjects and all subjects derived from these two in secondary schools.

However, on 8 July 2009, to uphold Bahasa Malaysia and to strengthen the English language (MBMMBI) policy was introduced to replace PPSMI. It focussed on efforts to uphold Bahasa Malaysia as the national language and to strengthen the English language to produce a society that was able to communicate effectively thus promoted unity, and they were able to garner competitiveness at the international level. The implementation of MBMMBI started with Year One in the primary schools in 2011, while for the Standard Four, form 1 and form 4 pupils, the implementation started in stages starting in the year 2010. This policy aimed to create a community that could use Bahasa Malaysia and the English language fluently in the national education system. The implementation included:

- the transformation of Bahasa Melayu and the English language curriculum.
- reinforcing the competence of the Bahasa Malaysia and English teachers.
- deployment of Bahasa Malaysia and English teachers according to their options.
- using the service of expertise, consultant, and teacher's assistant.
- expanding the publicity and campaign of strengthening the languages

- increasing pupils' involvement in language activities outside the classroom
- assessing and reporting pupils' achievement

This role of the English language was further strengthened in Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013 - 2035, where one of the aspirations for the Malaysian Education System and Malaysia pupils is bilingual proficiency. Every child is hoped to have fluency in Bahasa Malaysia that serves as the national language and language that promotes unity and English as the international language of communication. Once these pupils finish school, they should manage to work in the language environment of both in Bahasa Malaysia and English. To achieve this, once they finish their form 5, 70% of them will achieve at least a credit in SPM English. Thus, starting in 2016, the English Language SPM paper is a compulsory paper to pass (Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025).

Adding to the scenario was the Dual Language Programme (DLP), a programme introduced under the MBMMBI policy in 2015 and is still relevant until today. It empowers schools that fulfill certain criteria to have the teaching and learning session fully in English other than Bahasa Melayu. This is for Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics (STEM) subjects set by the Ministry of Education Malaysia. It aims to increase the mastering of the English language among pupils in Malaysia. More time is allocated to the exposure of the language through the teaching and learning of Science and Mathematics subjects in English. DLP is an option depending on the schools' complete resources, readiness, parents' support, and the achievement in Bahasa Melayu is at par or better than the national average achievement (Ministry of Education, Release Letter No. 8/2015).

Highly Immersive Programme (HIP) was introduced under MBMMBI policy in 2016 and it is also still practised in Malaysian schools nowadays. It supports the five aspirations in Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025. This programme involves all primary and secondary schools all over the nation. HIP practices the concept of the Whole School Approach, where the school head, teachers, pupils, parents, and the community work together to improve the pupils' achievement in the English language. HIP encourages the schools to collaborate with the government sector and non-government organisations to execute English language activities at schools. The implementation of the HIP at all primary and secondary national

schools includes carrying out activities in and outside the classroom, extra classes to help the pupils, and the outreach programme.

The Malaysia Education Blueprint 2013-2025 proposed that KBSM (Kurikulum Bersepadu Sekolah Menengah) to be revised and the blueprint emphasised on the importance of mastering the 21<sup>st</sup>-century skills among pupils. Skills such as critical thinking, creative and innovative, problem-solving and leadership enabled them to compete globally (Ministry of Education, Circular Letter No. 9 /2016). Kurikulum Standard Sekolah Menengah (KSSM) was a national curricular used by all secondary schools in the National Education System as embedded in Section 18 of the Education Act 1996. In response to the challenge of improving the standards of English in Malaysia, English Language Education Reform in Malaysia: The Roadmap 2015-2025 was produced to enable the nation to develop the English language education of an international level and in doing so, the curricula used must be the international standard and aligned to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR). CEFR is used in all schools at present. This is to add international relevance to the roadmap and also provide a common reference for aligning English Language curricula and pedagogy. The implementation of the new curricular started in 2016 where the Master Trainers cascaded the training worldwide (Implementing the CEFR-Aligned Curriculum, Ministry of Education). All schools under the Ministry of Education are using the new Dokumen Standard Kurikulum dan Pentaksiran (DSKP) introduced in 2017 (Ministry of Education, Circular Letter No. 9/2016). The revamping of the English programmes can be summarised as in Figure 1.1:



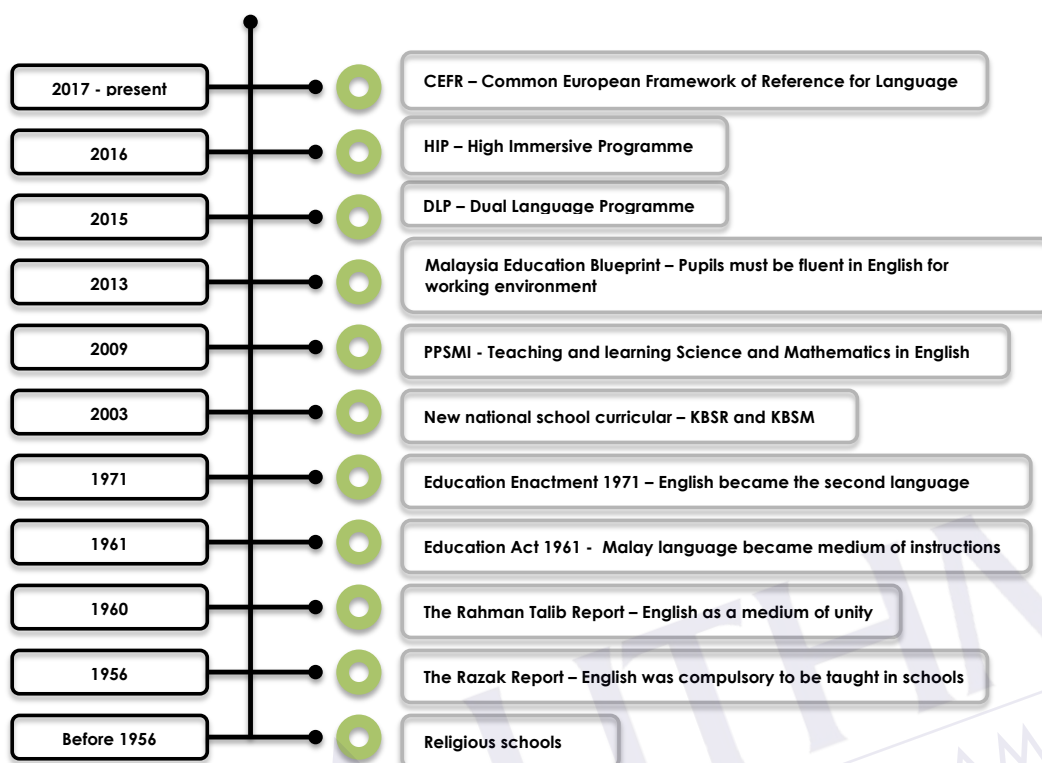


Figure 1.1: The timeline of the English Language in Malaysia Education System

It can be seen throughout the years since before independence, English, undoubtedly, has gained its importance in the Malaysian education system. Many policies and programmes were and have been made to ensure Malaysian pupils are fluent in the usage of English for better job opportunities and well prepared for their higher education. However, despite the eleven years of learning the English language at primary and secondary schools, many of them are unable to master the language when they were at school (Khalijah et. al., 2019). This can also be proven based on the EF English Proficiency Index yearly report.

Factors such as motivation (Dörnyei, 2009; Deci and Ryan, 1985 (in Noels *et al.*, 2008); Gardner and Lambert, 1972), learning strategies (Ellis, 1986; Habok & Magya, 2018); Hardan (2013), environment (Hilario, 2019) are among the dominant factors in contributing the success of language learning. However, most instructors and researchers have commonly acknowledged motivation as one of the important elements that affects the rate and prosperity of second language learning (Adwani & Shrivastava, 2017).

Motivation is one of the important elements in language learning. Motivation is the driving force that enables people to do something, how long they are willing to sustain the activity and how hard they are going to pursue it (Dörnyei, 2009). A lot of studies were conducted in proving that motivation is essential in mastering or acquiring the language, be it locally or internationally. Learners' motivation can go up and down depending on the context of language learning and motivation has a key role in the development of language skills (Alizadeh, 2016).

Although the learning process of second language depends on different factors, the most important of them are social and cultural background, individual learner language aptitude and motivation (Hetecoba, 1984). Hetecoba further explains the importance of motivation as:

- i. a motivated learner expends effort to learn the targetted language
- ii. the learner wants to achieve certain goals
- iii. the motivated learner will enjoy the task of learning the language

There are three dominant theories as in relation to motivation in second language learning, namely Gardner's Motivation Theory (Gardner, 1959), The Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 1984) and Dörnyei's L2MSS (Second Language Motivational Self System) Theory (2005). These theories evolved with the adaptation of the theory proposed before their time. For example, Dörnyei's Second Language Motivational Self-System (L2MSS) Theory was an adaptation and improvement form Gardner's and Deci & Ryan's theories.

Gardner's Motivation Theory was introduced in 1959 and since then has been profoundly influential in L2 learning motivation theory. Though Gardner regards motivation as something complex with no simple definition, he agrees that a motivated individuals are individuals with goals and persevere to achieve them (Guerro, 2015). Social contexts and attitudes towards the L2 and L2 communities are the grounds to any language learner's motivation. Fishbein and Ajzen (as cited in Guerro, 2015) propose attitudes as either positive or negative response an individual has towards a specific object, which is evidently the target language. Therefore, it can be said that this theory draws an important relationship between motivation and goal of an individual.

Other than Gardner's Motivation Theory, The Self-Determination Theory by Deci & Ryan (1984) derives from the theory of human motivation and personality in

social contexts. Social contexts are the elements that differentiate motivation whether it is informational, controlling or amotivating (Deci & Ryan, 1985). The effects of regulatory events depend on the way they are experienced or interpreted by the recipients. In the case of the significant between group differences produced by the three types of events (informational, controlling and amotivating), different people respond and react differently towards the same events. Therefore, everyone is oriented in each of the three ways and measuring the strength of each orientation allows the prediction of the relevant affects, cognitions and behaviours (Deci, Edward L, Ryan, 2010).

Dörnyei proposes his L2MSS Theory as the classical dichotomy was facing challenges and questions at that time. This is because Gardner's concept of "integrative" motivation was challenged in Canada as there existed the French-speaking community where learners integrated in multicultural environment. Thus, the goal of "integrative" motivation seemed not that relevant and many scholars began to question the validity and relevance of the "fusion" motivation (Ouyang & Lin, 2020).

Dörnyei's L2MSS Theory emphasises 'self' as the centre of motivation and behaviour research. It integrates the concepts of ideal self and ought-to self into studying the second language.

## **1.2 Problem statement**

The importance and advantages of the English language is further stated annually in EF English Proficiency Index. EF English Proficiency Index is an international education company that draws its conclusion from data collected via English tests. In its 2019 yearly report, several key findings of the advantages of English language included international collaboration, enhancement in technology, and countries with high English proficiency are more fair and open. This is parallel with English as the medium of international connectivity that correlates well with the measure of both equality and engagement with the outside world (EF English Proficiency Index, 2019).

The English language offers a lot of access to different possibilities. In today's world, the English language demonstrates the network effect: the more people use it, the more useful it becomes. Considering the fact the emphasis is given

to the language itself, especially in the education field, the findings of the ranking of Malaysia in the English Proficiency Index are shocking. Out of 72 countries in the world, Malaysia ranked 12<sup>th</sup> in 2016 with a score of 60.70. The rank decreased over the period from 2017 to 2019. In 2017 Malaysia ranked 17<sup>th</sup> out of 80 countries, 22<sup>nd</sup> out of 88 countries (2018), and in 2019, 26<sup>th</sup> out of 100 countries. In the year 2020, the proficiency level continued to decrease from high (2014-2019) to moderate for the year 2020 thus ranking 30<sup>th</sup> out of 100 countries that participated. Education, however, marked the very low proficiency among other industries in terms of proficiency among all the countries that participated (EL English Proficiency Index, 2020).

Malaysian pupils spend about 11 to 12 years learning the English language in primary and secondary schools (Normazidah, Koo, & Hazita, 2012). Yet, many of them are unable to master the language when they are at school (Khalijah et. al., 2019). This is proven as there are still failures in SPM, the most important exam after they have finished the 11 to 12 years as school pupils. This is further emphasised in Figure 1.2 below.

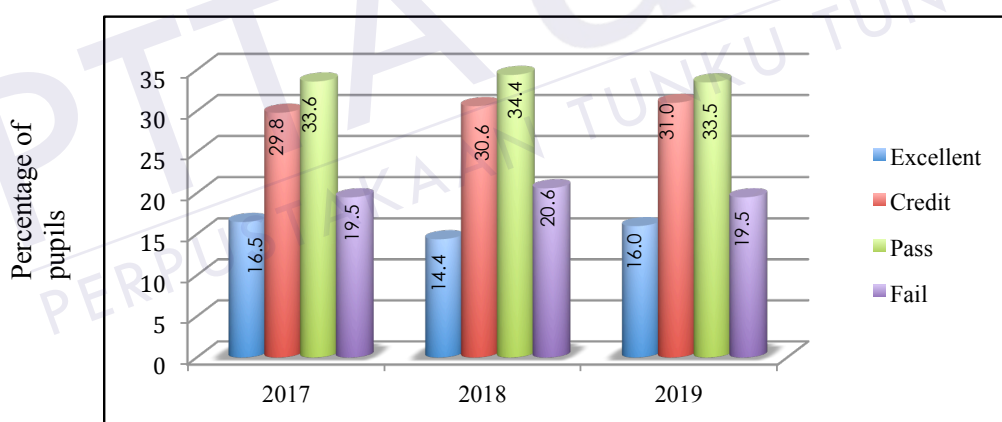


Figure 1.2: Malaysia's SPM English Language Achievement 2017 – 2019 (Malaysian Examination Syndicate, 2020)

The graph above indicates the achievement of the English Language in Sijil Pelajaran Malaysia (SPM) from the year 2017 to 2019. In 2017, the majority of the candidates fell in the pass category, which was 33.6%, and this was followed by credit in the results, which was 29.8%. The percentage of candidates who failed was 19.5 % compared to 16.5% of the candidates who obtained excellent results. Meanwhile, in 2018, the majority of the candidates passed the examination with

34.4% followed by credit in the results, which was 30.6%. Again, in 2018, the percentage of candidates who failed (20.6%) was higher than the candidates who obtained excellent results (14.4%). 2019 also showed the majority of the candidates passed the examination (33.5%) followed by those who obtained credit (31.0%). Those who failed, once again outnumbered those who obtained excellent results, which was 19.5% to 16.0%.

Thus, it is crucial to know what can be done to help the pupils to achieve good results in the SPM examination. As mentioned earlier, many factors contribute to these figures (Graph 1.2). A psychological and empathic teacher can be the factors that affect pupils' motivation in learning English (Khalijah et al, 2019). Other than that, socioeconomic factors (in the sense of better educated and higher-income families) also enhance education outcomes (Hassan and Rasiah, 2011). And not to forget, second language learners enhance their fluency in the second language to different motivation, emotion, and experience profiles (Saito, Sewaele, Abe and In'nami, 2018).

Therefore, the researcher would like to focus on the issue of English language achievement in secondary schools in Seremban as there is a scarce in this issue and location of the study.

### **1.3 Research objectives**

Based on the importance of motivation in language learning, by the end of this study, the answers to these objectives were obtained:

- i. to determine the type of L2MSS motivation among pupils in English language learning
- ii. to study the different types of L2MSS motivation in English language learners based on gender among the pupils in Seremban
- iii. to analyse the correlation between all L2MSS types of motivation and pupils' achievement in English language learning

### **1.4 Research questions**

Initially, this research aimed to answer these research questions:



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