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The Impact of Attitudes on Second Language Learning and Improvement: A Case Study in Peradeniya

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Attitudes are considered as an individual difference, which influence in the process of Second Language learning. The aim of the research is to identify whether there is an impact of attitudes on Second Language learning and improvement of the students. Thus, it identifies the relationship between the attitudes of the students and their English language improvement at the end of the 1st year English course. The mixed method comprised of both the quantitative and qualitative data methods are used in order to conduct the research on 78 1st year students at the Faculty of Science, University of Peradeniya. The data; a self- directed questionnaire, unstructured interviews and the marks of the students at the placement test and the final mark for the English subject are analysed. Accordingly, it is possible to identify a positive relationship between attitudes of the students and Second Language improvement. 83.3% of the students with positive attitudes towards learning English depict a positive improvement and the language learning and improvement of the students is higher than that of the students with neutral or negative attitudes. Moreover majority of the students having positive attitudes even with a low competency and proficiency in English, that is 74.07% have improved positively while the students with negative attitudes with an average or a good competency and proficiency in English have not depicted a remarkable improvement in English. On the other hand, 61.90% of the students with negative attitudes depict no improvement or a negative trend in language learning. Moreover, irrespective of the language competency, all the students with neutral attitudes depict only an average improvement. In conclusion, it is possible to identify a positive relationship between attitudes and language improvement and it becomes clear that attitudes affect in the process of language improvement of the students. Therefore, it is recommended to pay attention to the attitudes of the students in the course of the language teaching.

Key words: Attitudes, Motivation, Second Language, Competency, Proficiency