

**THE IMPACT OF APTITUDE TOWARD PERFORMANCE OF EFL
LEARNERS IN SMP NEGERI 1 GIANYAR**

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Abstrak

Bakat Bahasa merupakan salah satu prediktor dalam keberhasilan pembelajaran bahasa, baik itu bahasa kedua ataupun bahasa asing. Sebuah penelitian lapangan tentang prestasi siswa SMP Negeri 1 Gianyar dalam belajar bahasa asing yaitu Bahasa Inggris dilakukan. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui dampak dari bakat bahasa terhadap prestasi belajar bahasa peserta didik. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bagaimana bakat bahasa berperan dalam mempengaruhi prestasi siswa dalam belajar Bahasa Inggris. Umumnya, pelajar di SMP Negeri 1 Gianyar memiliki bakat yang baik yang juga sekaligus memberikan dampak positif terhadap prestasi mereka dalam belajar bahasa Inggris.

Kata kunci: bakat bahasa, prestasi belajar bahasa, Bahasa Inggris

1. Background of the Study

In this globalization era, most people are able to use at least one foreign language, and often people from a family with bilingual background learn two languages, apparently with ease. Many questions about what the factor that takes the biggest role in succeeding learning a second or foreign language are discussed. The researchers found out that in the last two decades, aptitude has been acknowledged as one of the most important factors and predictors of learners' ultimate success in Second Language Learning (SLA) (Dörnyei, 2005:31).

In part of learning second or foreign language, English is one of the most wide-world languages that has been spoken in many countries and used regularly

both at formal and informal environment. In Indonesia, almost all schools teach English as a Foreign Language (EFL) to their students. English is taught vary from elementary school level (or even kindergarten) until high school level. This proves that youngster in Indonesia is introduced with English in a very young age. Sekolah Menengah Pertama (SMP) Negeri 1 Gianyar is one of governmental Junior High schools that teach English to the local students. The local Indonesian students are demanded to be able to master English as one of the international languages. It becomes interesting to be discussed how the local Indonesian students learn to master different language even though English is not their mother tongue. Also, how the factors such as aptitude and motivation of the local students affect their ultimate success in learning EFL is one of the concerns.

2. Problem of the Study

2.1 What is the impact of aptitude toward the performance of EFL learners in SMP Negeri 1 Gianyar?

3. Aim of the Study

3.1. To find out the impact of aptitude toward the performance of EFL learners in SMP Negeri 1 Gianyar

4. Research Method

4.1 Data Source

The type of data used in this study are written data. The data in this study are in the form of scores and statistics of EFL learners' aptitude and English subject mark on their latest report card. The data source used in this study were taken from the process of learning of Junior High school students specifically students in the 8th grade with total population of 241 students, as for gender, 40.3% male and 59.7% female in SMP Negeri 1 Gianyar which is located at Jalan Ngurah Rai no 1 Gianyar.

4.2 Collecting Data

The method applied in collecting the data in this study was field research. In total, the field research in this study took 2 weeks. On one hand, to attain the result of the students' language aptitude, a test designed by Carroll (1957) was applied which is entitled Modern Language Aptitude Test (MLAT). The MLAT is originally designed for adult learners, but for this study, some adjustments were made in the difficulty level, the amount of questions and the time allocation in every section to suit the student which is under the consideration that they are still in junior high school. The material had also been translated before into Bahasa Indonesia. The moderated MLAT contains 48 items which is divided into five sections, they are: 1. Number Learning, 2. Phonetic Script, 3. Spelling Cues, 4. Word in Sentences, and 5. Paired Association. On the other hand, the parameter of the performance of EFL learners in SMP Negeri 1 Gianyar used in this study was taken from their marks of the English subject in report card.

4.3 Data Analysis

The aptitude result that was acquired using moderated MLAT, was then calculated and grouped into four groups; Poor (P), Fair (F), Good (G) and Excellent (E) based on the score ranging from 1-100. The collected data of EFL learners' aptitude was analyzed using Language Aptitude theory by Carroll. To answer what are the impacts of MLAT toward performance of EFL learners, the result of the English subject mark was compared with the result of moderated MLAT.

5. Analysis of Aptitude and Its Impact toward the Performance of EFL Learners in SMP Negeri 1 Gianyar

4.1 The Aptitude of EFL Learners in SMP Negeri 1 Gianyar

The collected data of aptitude were transferred into the form of tables and charts descriptively explained. The aptitude result that was acquired using moderated MLAT was, then calculated and grouped into four groups; Poor (P), Fair (F), Good (G) and Excellent (E) based on the score ranging from 1-100. Since every part in

moderated MLAT test shows different competencies and abilities, the detail of the result of the students in every section would be drawn.

| Part | Score | | | | |
|----------------------------|-------|----|----|----|-----|
| | <50 | 60 | 70 | 80 | 90> |
| Number Learning | 5 | 8 | 12 | 33 | 44 |
| Phonetic Script | 7 | 8 | 10 | 38 | 39 |
| Spelling Cues | 26 | 33 | 28 | 9 | 6 |
| Word in Sentences | 31 | 36 | 13 | 14 | 8 |
| Paired Associations | 3 | 6 | 11 | 30 | 52 |

Table 1. The aptitude score of EFL learners in SMP negeri 1 Gianyar

Part I of the MLAT, Number Learning, tests auditory and memory abilities associated with sound-meaning relationships. In this part, EFL learners learned the names of numbers in a new language. Subsequently, they would hear the names spoken aloud, and they were asked to write down these numbers. For example, if they heard the speaker say the number “seventeen” in English, they would write down 17. But in the test, they were given the numbers in a new language. There were 10 questions to be answered in this part.

As can be seen in the Table 1, forty four students (43%) scored 90 or more, thirty three students (32%) scored 80, twelve students (12%) scored 70, eight students (8%) scored 60 the rest five students (5%) scored 50 or below. From 102 respondents, 77 students (75%) scored more than 80 and even 28 students (27%) obtained a perfect score.

Part II of the MLAT, Phonetic Script, is a test of student’s ability to learn a system for writing English sounds phonetically. First EFL learners would learn phonetic symbols for some common English sounds. For each question, they would see a set of four separate syllables. Each syllable is spelled phonetically. A speaker would model the sounds by pronouncing each of the four syllables in a set. After the speaker models the sounds in five sets, the EFL learners then were asked to look back

at the first set. The speaker would go through the groups again, but this time the speaker would say only one of the 4 syllables in a set. EFL learners' task was to select the syllable that had a phonetic spelling that matched the syllable they heard. There were 10 questions to be answered in this section.

As can be seen in Table 1, thirty nine (38%) students scored 90+, thirty eight students (37%) scored 80, ten students (10%) scored 70, eight students (8%) scored 60, and the rest seven students (7%) were only able to get below 50. This result was promising that out of 102 respondents, seventy eight (75%) students reached score more than 80 and in the data taken, even twenty two students got a perfect score.

Part III of MLAT is Spelling Cues. This part of the MLAT requires the ability to associate sounds with symbols and depends somewhat on knowledge of foreign language which is for the study the English vocabulary was utilized. Each question in this part has a group of words. The word at the top of the group was not spelled in a usual way. Instead, it is spelled approximately as it is pronounced. EFL learners' task is to recognize the disguised word from the spelling. In order to show that they recognize the disguised word, the EFL learners were asked to look for one of the five words beneath it that corresponds most closely in meaning to the disguised word. There are 10 questions to answer in this section.

Table 1 shows how students score in Part III. A slightly different result was found. From 102 respondents, only six students (6%) scored 90>, nine students (9%) scored 80, twenty eight students (27%) belonged to group with score 70, thirty three (32%) students belonged to group with score 60 and the rest twenty six (25%) scored 50 or below. None of the students got a perfect score in this section.

Part IV Word in Sentences of The MLAT questions test recognition, analogy, and understanding of a far greater range of syntactic structures than the couple questions shown. In each question, the first sentence is called the *key* sentence. One word in the *key* sentence is underlined and printed in capital letters. EFL learners were asked to select the letter of the word in the second sentence that plays the same role in that sentence as the underlined word in the *key* sentence. There are 8 questions in this section.

From Table 1, it can be seen that eight students (8%) score 90+, fourteen students (14%) scored 80, thirteen students (13%) scored 70, thirty six students (35%) scored 60 and thirty one students (30%) scored 50 or below. Once again, none of the students scored perfect in this part.

The last part of MLAT is Paired Association. This part focuses on the rote memory aspect of learning foreign languages. On the test, EFL learners had 1 minute 20 seconds to memorize 12 words. They then did a practice exercise. They were allowed to look back at the vocabulary during this practice exercise, but they were not permitted to look at the vocabulary while they were doing the Part V questions that follow the exercise. Their task here is to memorize the Maya-English vocabularies. Then they were given 5 options for each question to test their short-term memory. There are 10 questions for this section.

The result of the test can be seen in Table 1. Out of 102 students, fifty two students (51%) scored 90+, thirty (29%) students scored 80, eleven students (11%) scored 70, six students (6%) scored 60 and the rest three students (3%) scored 50 or below. Surprisingly, 39 students got a perfect score in this part.

As soon as the moderated MLAT was applied and all the result of each part was gathered, four groups were made in order to separate score of the EFL learners. These groups were made based on the average score of all part of moderated MLAT. As known before, those groups are Poor (P) with an average score below 55, Fair (F) group with an average score between 56-70, Good (G) group with an average score 71-85, and the last Excellent (E) group with an average score 86-100.

Furthermore, it was found that the numbers of students with different aptitude score varied. The aptitude score of the students varied from the lowest 50 to the highest 94. EFL learners of SMP Negeri 1 Gianyar had respectively above average aptitude since the average score of students was 79.7 out of 100. From 102 respondents, 12 students (12%) belonged to group P with score range below 55. 18 students (17%) belonged to group F with score range 56-70, 56 students (55%) of them belonged to group G which they scored in range of 71-85, while the rest 16 students (16%) belonged to group E with score range 86-100.

Based on Carroll's theory, the students who were the member of group G and E have better ability components and more promising in learning foreign language than students who belonged to group F and P.

4.2 The Impacts of Aptitude on the Performance of EFL Learners in SMP Negeri 1 Gianyar

As stated by Dörnyei that aptitude is one the best predictors of one's ability in language learning, the result of the moderated MLAT and English mark shows their correlation. The groups of the student who have an above average aptitude score (i.e. Group G and E) had a better performance in English subject in their school than the students who has below average aptitude score in group F and P.

From the result of MLAT and the English mark of the students that had been gathered before, a comparison between them was executed. As can be seen in Table 2, the students from group E in average scored 88 points in aptitude. The students of group G, on the other hand, scored in average of 80. The students who belonged to group F scored in average of 69, and the last was group P with average score 55.

| Group | Average score of Aptitude | English Mark on Report Card |
|---------|---------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Group P | 55 | B- |
| Group F | 69 | B |
| Group G | 82 | B+ |
| Group E | 88 | A |

Table 2. Average score of aptitude in each group

In Table 2, it can also be seen the average English mark in latest report card of student who belonged to each group that was mentioned before. The comparison of both was drawn; the aptitude and English mark of the students was directly proportional. It was proved by students in group E with average aptitude score of 88, got A in their English mark, while students in group G who scored 82 in aptitude, got

an average B+ for their English mark. On one hand, students who belonged to group F scored 69 in aptitude and had B in English mark. On the other hand, students who belonged to group P scored 55 in aptitude got B- in English mark.

6. Conclusion

In this study, a research about performance of Indonesian Junior High students of SMP Negeri 1 Gianyar in learning a foreign language, English, was taken. Through the Modern Language Aptitude Test, it was found that aptitude plays a role in impacting students' performance in learning English. The MLAT showed EFL learners in this school generally had Good language Aptitude motivation. From 102 respondents, 12 students (12%) belonged to group P with score range below 55. 18 students (17%) belonged to group F with score range 56-70, 56 students (55%) of them belonged to group G which they scored in range of 71-85, while the rest 16 students (16%) belonged to group E with score range 86-100. The impacts of aptitude of EFL learners toward their performance in English also found quite satisfying. The aptitude and English mark of the students was directly proportional. It was proved by students in group Excellent with average aptitude score of 88, got A in their English mark, while students in group Good who scored 82 in aptitude, got in average B+ for their English mark. On one hand, students who belonged to group F scored 69 in aptitude and had B in English mark. On the other hand, students who belonged to group P scored 55 in aptitude got B- in English.

7. Bibliography

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