

BUKAVU STUDENTS' MOTIVATIONS AND ATTITUDES TOWARD ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING

Laurent MUTEGHEKI BAH

Institut Supérieur Pédagogique de Bukavu (ISP), RD Congo

laurentbaha1@gmail.com

Abstract : English is spreading worldwide and is used in science, business, cultural exchange, etc. As a result, many people are learning it. However, motivation and attitude towards learning a foreign language are among the determining factors that can influence learners' effectiveness. *This study was conducted in this framework.* It aimed to examine the types of motivations and attitudes that Congolese Bukavu students have towards English learning. A questionnaire was distributed to 528 students from four institutions of higher learning. Frequencies, descriptive statistics, and correlations were used to process the collected data using SPSS software. The results show that students have positive attitudes towards the language, their teachers, and the British and England. Their positive attitudes motivate them to learn English, as does their belief that mastering this language will help them live a better life. Nevertheless, students have a negative attitude towards English courses, stating that it was not designed according to their needs.

Key words: attitude, Bukavu students, English language learning, motivation

MOTIVATIONS ET ATTITUDES DES ÉLÈVES DE BUKAVU À L'ÉGARD DE L'APPRENTISSAGE DE LA LANGUE ANGLAISE

Résumé : L'anglais se reprend de plus en plus dans le monde et est utilisé dans les domaines de la science, des affaires, des échanges culturels etc. Cela fait que plusieurs personnes l'apprennent. Cependant, la motivation et l'attitude à l'égard de l'apprentissage d'une langue étrangère font partie des facteurs déterminants qui peuvent influencer l'efficacité des apprenants. Cette étude a été menée dans ce cadre. Elle visait à examiner les types de motivations et d'attitudes des étudiants congolais de Bukavu à l'égard de l'apprentissage de l'anglais. Sur ce, un questionnaire a été distribué à 528 étudiants venant de quatre institutions supérieures et Universitaires. Des fréquences, des statistiques descriptives et des corrélations ont été utilisées pour traiter les données collectées à l'aide du logiciel SPSS. Les résultats montrent que les étudiants ont une attitude positive à l'égard de cette langue, leurs enseignants, les Britanniques et l'Angleterre. Leurs attitudes positives les motivent à apprendre l'anglais, ainsi que la conviction selon laquelle la connaissance de cette langue les aiderait à vivre une vie meilleure. Néanmoins, les étudiants ont une attitude négative à l'égard des cours d'anglais déclarant qu'il n'a pas été conçu en fonction de leurs besoins.

Mots clés : apprentissage de l'anglais, attitude, étudiants de Bukavu, motivation,

Introduction

Language is our primary source of communication. It is the method through which we share our ideas and thoughts with others. There are thousands of them in the world. Some are spoken by millions of people and others by only a few thousand. English is one of the most used in the world. With the help of emerging technologies, English plays a major role in several sectors, including medicine, engineering, education, etc. It is used in science, aviation, business, diplomacy, and tourism. Many countries around the world include it in their school curricula. The Democratic Republic of the Congo, which is one of the African French-speaking countries, has established it as the second language of education. Since 2011, this has been taught at all levels of every subject of study in Congolese higher education.

Among the factors that contribute to the success of second or foreign language learning, motivations and attitudes are widely recognized as two important attributes that influence how well students learn languages. Positive attitudes towards a second or foreign language can influence motivation for learning and affect its achievement. Brown (1994) argues that second language learners benefit from them and that negative perceptions may lead to decreased motivation.

Considering the importance that English plays today and the necessity to learn it so as to survive in the present world, this study seeks to find out the types of motivation that Congolese students have for studying it. It also investigates their attitudes towards this and the impact motivation and attitude have on their desire to learn this language. Its introduction in Congolese institutions of higher learning was done without any prior study of the factors that would influence students' motivation to learn it. Moreover, no study was done on finding out about their attitude towards that language. With the objective of having a learner-centered teaching program, I believe that knowledge of the factors that influence Congolese students' attitudes and motivations towards its learning is important. This knowledge can be helpful not only to teachers but also to textbook designers and legislators in providing and designing teaching materials that are capable of enhancing learners' motivation and positively influencing their attitude. Considering this particular problem that has existed for years in the Congolese educational sector, I find it relevant to deal with this study so as to shed light on this particular language-learning reality.

This study aims at investigating Bukavu students' needs for English and their attitudes towards their English course, teachers, British people, and England since they are among the factors that can positively or negatively influence students' language learning. It also tries to see the influence and impact the above-mentioned facts have on its learning. Hence, the following research questions have been asked:

Are Bukavu students instrumentally or integratively motivated to learn English?

What are students' attitudes towards the English language, the British people, and England?

What are their attitudes towards their teachers of English and English courses?

How do students' motivations and attitudes influence their learning of English?

The hypotheses are formulated as follows:

Students need English for instrumental purposes.

Learners have a positive attitude towards the English language.

Most learners have positive attitudes towards British people and England.
Most students have negative attitudes toward their teachers of English and English courses.
Students' motivations and attitudes negatively influence their learning of English.

This study is the first step towards the identification of Congolese students' motivation and attitude towards English and its learning process. Bukavu is one of the Congolese cities located in the east of the country. In this study, students from this town are simply used as an illustration or a pretext for a national need. At a later stage, the study could be made at a national level. This will consist in identifying the factors that are common to the majority of Congolese students that legislators could refer to make a relevant teaching program that is capable of arousing students' motivation to learn English based on their needs for the language.

Literature review on motivation and attitude in second/foreign language learning

Motivation

Motivation is a key factor in language learning, and the importance of motivation in human activity has long been emphasized in the fields of social psychology and education (e.g., Brown, 1994; Ehrman & Oxford, 1995; Gardner et al., 1995; Dörnyei, 2005). In second or foreign language motivation research, motivation is defined by Gardner (1985, p. 10) as "the combination of effort plus desire to achieve the goal of learning the language plus favorable attitudes towards learning the language."

Motivation, in language learning, is often categorized into two broad types: integrative motivation and instrumental motivation. Lambert (1974, p. 98) asserts that integrative motivation reflects an interest in learning another language because of "a sincere and personal interest in the people and culture represented by the other language group." Gardner (2001, p. 5) states that integrative motivation reflects a genuine interest in learning the second language in order to come closer to the other language community. At one level, this implies an openness to and respect for other cultural groups and ways of life.

On the other hand, Instrumental motivation emphasizes the importance of the functional and utilitarian reasons for learning the language, such as getting a better job or passing an entry exam. Dörnyei et al. (2005) argue that instrumental motivation refers to the perceived pragmatic benefits of second or foreign language proficiency. It reflects the recognition that for many learners, it is the usefulness of second or foreign language proficiency that provides the greatest driving force to learn it.

Positive correlations between motivation and second language outcome variables in many different contexts have been reported (e.g., Schmidt et al., 1996; Clement et al., 1994; Brown et al., 2001). Ellis (1994, p. 513) states that integrative motivation has been shown to be strongly related to second or foreign language achievement. It combines with instrumental motivation to serve as a powerful predictor of success in formal contexts. According to him, learners with integrative one are more active in class and are less likely to drop out.

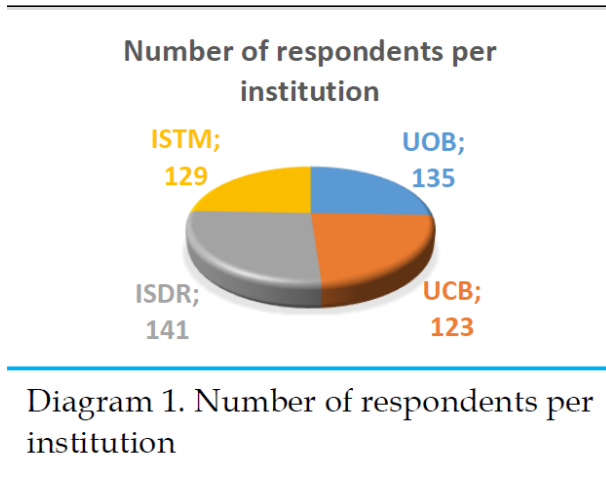
Attitude

Attitude is another important non-linguistic factor that might affect foreign language learning that is also closely related to motivation. *The Longman Dictionary of Applied Linguistics and Language Teaching* (2002, p. 297) defines language attitudes as the ones that speakers of different languages or language varieties have towards each other's languages or to their own language. Attitudes towards a language may show how people feel about the speakers of that language, and this may have an effect on language learning.

In second or foreign language research, attitudes are mostly categorized into two main types: the ones that people have towards the target language and their dispositions towards the language-speaking community and culture. Favorable positive state of mind towards them are assumed to foster the learning process, while negative attitudes on the other hand might impede language learning. According to Scott et al. (2009), negative ones can have a bad effect on learners' specific skills, resulting in low achievements, for instance, in reading and spelling tasks.

Research methodology

This research on students' motivation and attitudes was conducted in Bukavu. Thanks to a questionnaire written in French, 528 first-year undergraduate students from four institutions of higher education were surveyed. These are: "Université Officielle de Bukavu" (UOB), "Université Catholique de Bukavu" (UCB), "Institut Supérieur de Développement Rural" (ISDR), and "Institut Supérieur des Techniques Médicales" (ISTM). The questionnaire is subdivided into five parts. The first consists of questions about students' attitudes towards the English language and learning in general, while the second includes inquiries about their attitudes towards their English course. The third part examines their attitude towards their English teachers, and the fourth part examines the types of motivation they have for learning English. The fifth part consists of issues related to learners' attitudes towards British people and England. The questionnaire consisted of 13 questions that students had to answer by choosing only one answer for each question. In addition, they were given the opportunity to explain their answers by writing down why they chose a particular answer. The questionnaire was also composed of some Likert-type questions with a series of statements for which the respondents were asked to indicate their agreement or disagreement by circling a number from 1 to 5: 1 (strongly agree), 2 (agree), 3 (neither agree nor disagree), 4 (disagree), 5 (strongly disagree). The diagram below presents the number of my respondents per institution:



Results

Students’ Attitudes Towards the English language and English language learning

To investigate about students’ attitudes towards the English language and English language learning the following questions were asked to them:

- Question 1. *Do you like the English language?*
- Question 2. *What do you think of the English language?*
- Question 3. *What do you find most difficult when learning English?*
- Question 4. *What is the easiest thing about English for you?*

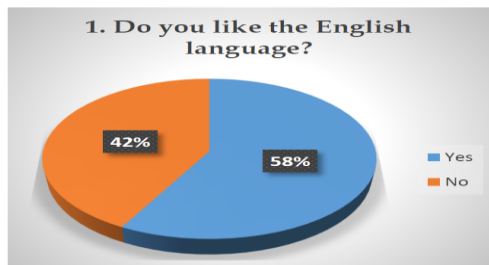


Diagram 2. Students’ attitudes towards the English language

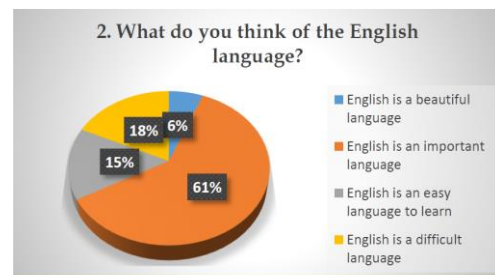


Diagram 3. Students’ consideration of the English language



Diagram 4. Students’ English language hardest aspect to learn

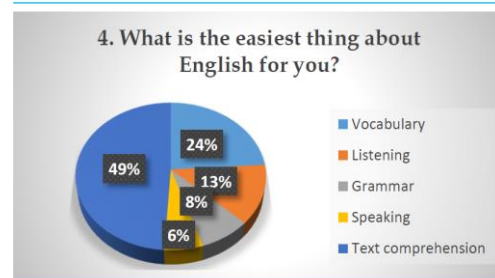


Diagram 5. Students’ English language easiest aspect to learn

It can be seen in the first diagram that 58% of my respondents like the English language. In their comments, they said that English is an important language and the most spoken in the world. However, 42% of them do not like it, claiming that it is a difficult language.

As for the second question, more than half of my respondents (61%) consider English an important language. In their comments, they state that this language is rapidly spreading all over the world thanks to the new technologies and it is spoken by many people. Other students say that English is an easy language because its grammar does not contain as many complicated rules as there are in French. A minority, however – 18% – believes that English is a difficult language.

In the third diagram, it can be seen that the majority of students, 37%, consider "spoken English" to be the most difficult thing. For 168 students (32%), it is "grammar." Students affirm that it is very hard for them to speak and communicate because they lack a good command of its vocabulary and grammar. As for 19% of students, it is "listening." In their comments, they state that they have difficulty understanding what English people say because they have a rapid flow of words and do not pronounce all the syllables clearly. Only 12% of students said that "text comprehension" was the most difficult.

Almost half of my respondents (49%), find "text comprehension" the easiest thing because they have been used to reading English texts since high school. Others argued that, unlike "speaking," which has to be done spontaneously, reading is not too demanding since one can read the text several times to understand its content. One hundred and thirty-eight students (24%) said that English vocabulary is the easiest. For 69 students (13%), it is "listening." Eight percent state that it is "grammar" and 6% say it is "speaking." However, other students stated that English words are not very difficult to learn because many of them look like French words they know.

Students' Attitudes towards English Courses

The following questions were asked of students with the view to learning about their attitudes towards their English course:

Question 5: *Do you like your English course?*

Question 6. *What do you like most about your English course?*

Question 7. *What do you like least about your English course?*

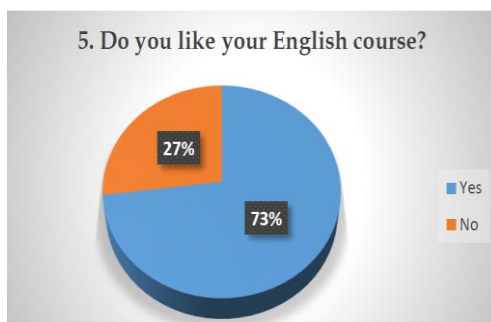


Diagram 6. Students' attitudes towards their English course

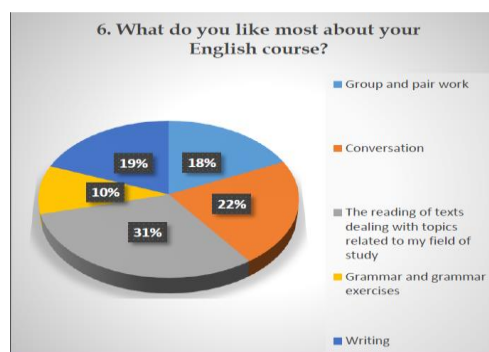


Diagram 7. Students' most interesting elements in their English course

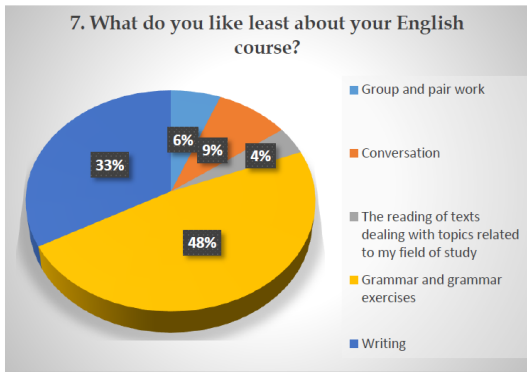


Diagram 8. Students' least interesting elements in their English course

The results show that three-quarters of my informants (73%) do not like English because of its content, which they find not interesting. Other students state that they dislike the way the course has been designed and is being taught to them.

As for the sixth question, the majority of students, 31%, say that "the reading of texts that deal with topics related to their field of study" is the thing they like the most. According to them, such texts allow them to study technical expressions that they are more likely to use later in their professional lives. 19% say that "conversation" is what they like the most because, thanks to it, they can become fluent in English. The other 19% of students said: "Composition" because it helps them write down the kinds of sentences they could be writing in the future when they get jobs. The statement "pair and group work" has been chosen by 18%. Only 10% said that grammar and grammar exercises do not interest them much.

As far as the seventh question is concerned, it is noticeable that the majority of my respondents (48%) do not like "grammar and grammar exercises." Many of them argue that English grammar is very difficult and boring because it has so many rules. Thirty percent of students say that "composition" is not interesting, and 9% circled "conversation." Only 6% circled the answer "pair and group work," and 4% circled "the reading of texts that deal with topics related to their field of study."

Students' Attitudes towards their Teachers

In this part of the work, two questions were asked of the students:

Question 8: *Do you have a positive, negative, or neutral attitude towards your English teacher?*

Question 9: *Read each of the statements below and circle the answer (12345) that best describes your opinion about your English teacher.*

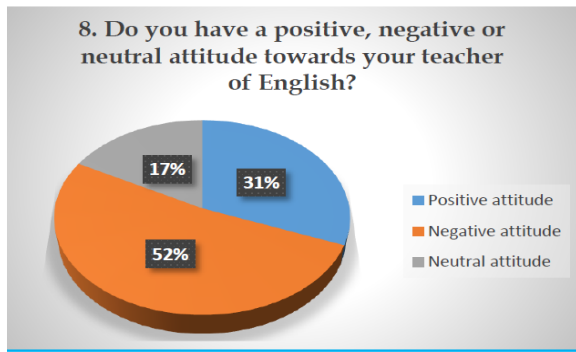
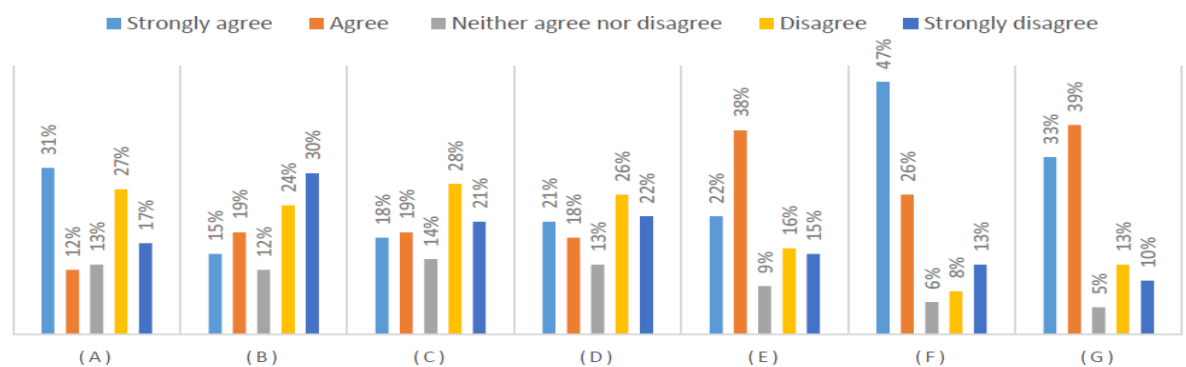


Diagram 9. Students' attitudes towards their teachers of English

9. Students' opinions about their teachers' teaching methods



- (A) My teacher of English does all his/her best to make us love English
- (B) My teacher of English uses many teaching materials
- (C) My teacher of English uses good methods that make it easy for us to learn English
- (D) My teacher of English gives us many opportunities to express ourselves in English
- (E) The different texts that the teacher gives us to read do not deal with topics related to my field of study.
- (F) My teacher of English makes his lessons much more theoretical than practical
- (G) My teacher of English did not design his/her course according to my needs

Diagram 10. Students' opinions about their teachers' teaching methods

It is of note that more than half of my informants, 52%, have a negative attitude concerning their English teachers. However, 31% have a positive attitude, and only 17% have a neutral attitude. Most of the students with a negative attitude gave comments such as "Our teacher treats us as if we knew English well," "Our teacher of English does not help us much to learn this language," and "The teacher of English does not know how to make his lesson interesting and easy." On the other hand, those who claimed to have a positive attitude said: "Our teacher knows how to teach English."

As for the results of the ninth question, 43% of students said that their teachers do their best to teach them English, while 49% disapproved of the teaching methods used by their teachers. Forty-eight percent said that their teachers do not give them many opportunities to speak. For 60% of students, the different texts that their teachers give them to read have nothing to do with their fields of study. Seventy-three percent state that their classes are made to look more theoretical than practical, and finally, the majority of students, 72% strongly agree that their course is designed not to meet their needs

Students' Motivation and their Future Desire to Learn English

To find out about students' motivation and their future desire to learn English, the following questions were asked to them:

Question 10: *Do you think it is important to know English?*

Question 11. *Read each of the statements below and circle the answer (12345) that best describes your reasons for learning English.*

Question 12. *Do you want to continue learning English after graduation?*

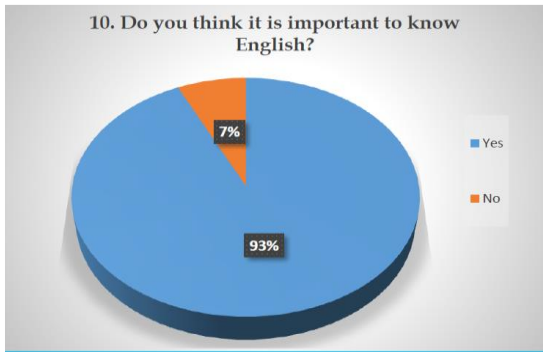
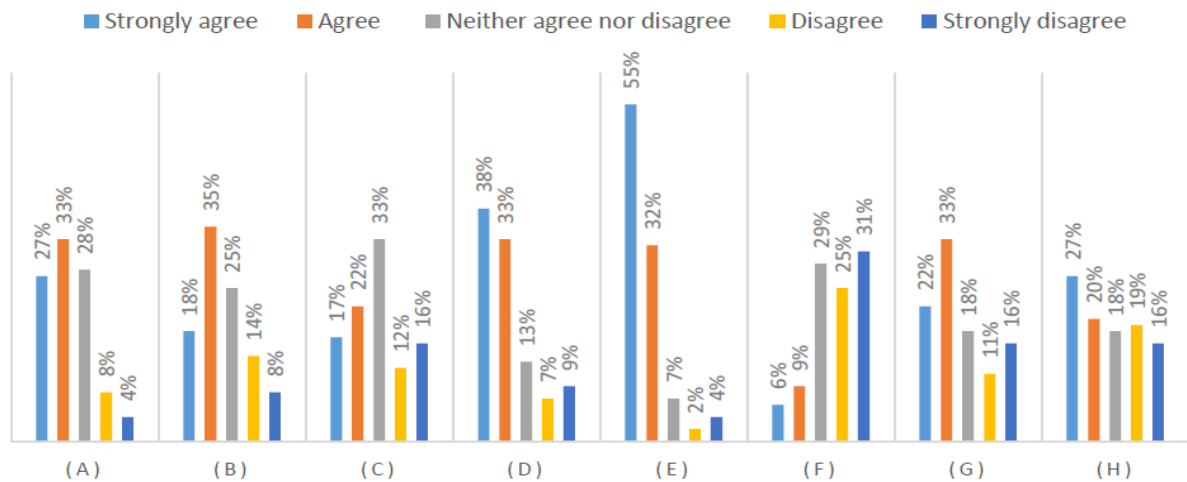


Diagram 11. Students' opinions about English learning

11. Students' instrumental and integrative reasons for studying English



- (A) I am learning English to communicate easily with other people.
- (B) I am learning English to be able to follow English programs on television, radio; to read English books, magazines etc.
- (C) Knowledge of the English language will be very important for my choice of post-graduate studies.
- (D) Having a good command of English is useful to find a good job in the future.
- (E) I will be able to travel to many countries around the world if I have a good mastery of English language
- (F) I study English to know more about English-speaking countries and their culture.
- (G) I am learning English because I like English people.
- (H) I study English to be like the English people and to behave like them.

Diagram 12. Students' reasons for studying English

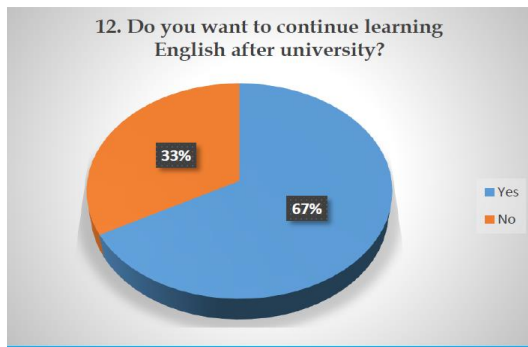


Diagram 13. Students' future desire to learn English

From the results of the tenth question, it is noticeable that the majority of my informants (93%) think it is important to master English. Many of them say that this language can help them achieve many things in their future lives. Only 7% of students say it is not important to know English.

As for the reasons for their studying English, 33% of them affirm that they do it to communicate with other people. Thirty-five percent study it to be able to follow the media. However, 33% of students neither agreed nor disagreed that knowledge of it will be important for their choice of post-graduate studies. Thirty-eight percent of the students agree that the mastery of this language will be useful for them to find good jobs after their studies, and 55% affirm that this will allow them to travel to many countries. As far as integrative motivation is concerned, it is noticed that 60% of students do not study this language to know more about English-speaking countries and their culture. However, only 15% say they do it for that reason. 22% of students strongly agree and 33% agree that they study it because they like the English people, and almost half of my respondents (47%) argue that they study it to be like them.

As for students' desire to continue learning English after their university studies, 67% answered "yes," attesting that this language will still be useful to them in their future lives. 33% said "no."

Students' Attitudes Towards British People and England

To know about students' attitudes towards British people and England, a Likert-type questionnaire was given to them. This was composed of nine statements, from which students were asked to select the ones that best described their attitude.

Question 13. *Read each of the statements below and circle the answer (12345) that best describes your attitude towards British people and England.*

13. Students' attitude towards British people and England

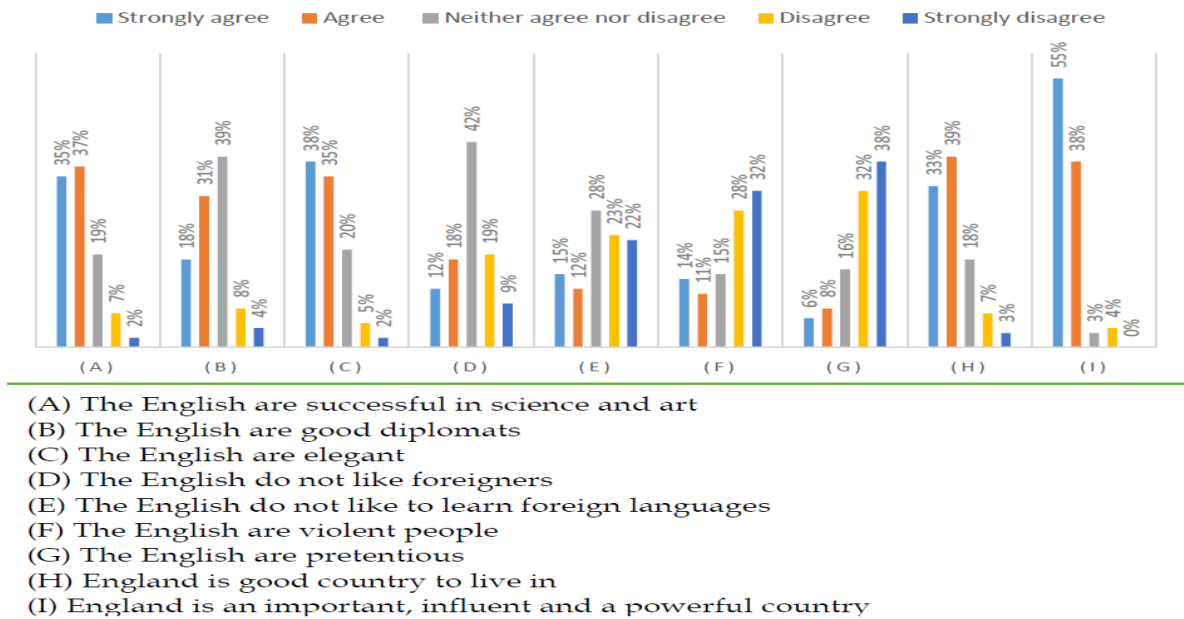


Diagram 14. Students' attitudes towards British people and England

The results show that 72% of my informants acknowledge that English people are successful in science and art. Forty-nine percent say that these people are good diplomats, and 73% state that they are elegant people. However, 30% of students believe that the English do not like foreigners, and 42% neither agree nor disagree with this statement. Forty-five percent of students strongly disagree and agree with the statement that "English people are not inclined to learn foreign languages," and 28% neither agree nor disagree with this statement. Regarding the temperament of English people, 60% of students believe that these people do not have an explosive temperament, and 70% say that English people are not pretentious.

As for the students' attitude towards England, 72% claim that it is a very good country to live in. Only 7% disagree, and 3% of them disagree completely. 73% of students agree with the statement that "England is a very important, influential, and powerful country." Only 4% disagreed with the above statement.

Discussion

This research aimed to find out about Bukavu students' motivations and attitudes so as to see the influence they have on English language learning. The results show that learners have a positive attitude towards English and its learning, seeing the importance and usefulness of this language in the world today. They have come to understand that learning it is more than a necessity for anyone to survive in this century. The positive attitude they have towards this language is a factor that motivates the majority of them (61%) to learn it for instrumental reasons. A similar conclusion was reached by Al Mamun et al. (2012), who conducted a questionnaire survey with 79 randomly selected non-major English undergraduate students from Khulna University, Bangladesh, to gauge their attitude towards EFL. The research

findings indicate that the learners had a positive attitude towards the English language, and their motivational orientation was instrumental in nature.

The first reason for their motivation to learn English is much more instrumental than integratively oriented is that students believe that this language is an important tool that people should have to earn their living. Seventy-nine percent of them contended that the mastery of this language is a very important factor in getting a good job. The second reason is that my respondents are not in contact with the British and Americans. A similar conclusion was reached by Zhao (2012), who had conducted a study to investigate the basic motivation types of 124 Chinese pupils who were learning English as a second language at a local college in China. The findings indicated that these learners were more instrumentally than integratively motivated. This was due to their limited opportunities to communicate with the target native group or foreigners, which might be the reason why learning English through integrative motivation was difficult. (<https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1151555.pdf>)

The results also show that learners have a positive attitude towards the British people and England. This is another factor that motivates them to study English. These findings are in accordance with findings reported by Gardner and Lamber (1959), who found that the motivation to learn an L2 depends on the attitude towards the L2 community and the desire to become a member of that community. Their knowledge of the successes that the British people are having in science, art, and diplomacy motivated 47% of them to learn English so as to identify with the British. In addition, the view that they have of British people as "gentlemen" has motivated some students to learn their language in order to look like them. From their comments, we can see that both types of motivation have a positive impact on their learning. A similar conclusion was reached by Dornyei (2001), who also found in her research that both instrumental and integrative motivation are positively related and contribute to the achievement of language learning. Wan-er (2008) also claimed that, when instrumental and integrative motivation are used together in a language study, it creates more positive results for the learners.

Nevertheless, although 58% of them state that they recognize the importance of English and the necessity to master this language, the majority of them (73%) do not like the English course. Through their various comments, we notice that this is due to the fact that they view its content and the methods used by their teachers to teach it as inadequate. The results show that the methods used by teachers have a negative impact on their motivation to learn it. This result ties well with previous studies by Harmer (1991), who affirmed that whenever the learners feel bored with the teachers' method, their motivation would likely be lost or gradually decreased, as Harmer (1991) said: "If the students lose confidence in the teaching method of the teachers, they will become demotivated."

It is worth mentioning that the limitations of the present study naturally include not assessing the impact of students' motivation on their academic performance. Another limitation is the failure to see the influence of parents and the level of their education on students' motivation and attitude towards English language learning.

Pedagogical Implications

There are some possible pedagogical implications for teachers of English to support students' motivation to learn English. From the fact that students assert that their teachers a) tend to make the English course much more theoretical than practical, b) focus more on the accuracy of the language and grammatical structures and not on the communicative aspect of the language, and c) teach things that have nothing to do with the needs of the students, it is clear that their teachers do not apply communicative language teaching and student-centered learning approaches.

Referring to the theory of communicative language teaching and student-centered learning approaches (William Littlewood (1981), David Nunan's (1988), Larsen-Freeman, (2000); Alan McLean (1980:18);), we propose the following to English teachers:

Teachers should be using communicative language teaching methods by paying systematic attention to functional as well as structural aspects of language and combining these into a more fully communicative view.

While teaching, the emphasis should be on language in use rather than language as structure. Hence, the students' communicative competence should be the objective rather than linguistic competence.

Teachers should move beyond having the students master the structures of English to the point where they can have students use them to communicate meaningfully in real-life situations.

Teachers should put an emphasis on learning to communicate through interaction in the target language and an enhancement of the learner's own personal experiences as important contributing elements to classroom learning.

Teachers should attempt to link classroom language learning with language activities outside the classroom.

There should be a balance between fluency and accuracy.

Dialogues should be used as a tool for learning.

The four skills (speaking, listening, reading, and writing) should be equally emphasized for learning.

Various kinds of activities should be used in the classroom, such as role play, interviews, filling in the information gap, games, language exchanges, surveys, and pair work.

Teachers should use the language needs of the learner as the basis for the syllabus. Language contents should also be appropriate to the learners' needs and interests. Teachers should also include learning activities that are personally relevant to learners. Since students learn best when they become engaged in activities or tasks in which they have to use the target language, learners' communicative needs should be a priority.

Teachers should do less speaking so that students can do more discovering.

They should encourage students to learn from and with each other.

Teachers and students should work together to create a climate for learning.

They should listen to and respect each learner's point of view.

The learner should become the active agent in the learning process, and they should take charge of the learning while the teacher becomes a mere facilitator of that learning.

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to find out about Bukavu students' attitudes towards the English course, teachers, the language, its native people and land, so as to see how their attitude towards them influences their motivation to learn English. A questionnaire was given to 528 students from four schools of higher education. The results show that the majority of them are motivated to learn English for instrumental reasons. However, others claim to learn it for integration purposes in native communities. A large majority claim to have a very positive attitude towards the English course, teachers, the language, its native people and land, and this attitude is a factor that also motivates them to learn it. Concerning their attitudes towards teachers and their course contents, it has been noticed that a large proportion of learners show a negative attitude towards the teachers and disapprove of their teaching methods as well as their course contents. On this basis, we conclude that teachers have a very important role to play in ensuring that learners have a good attitude and motivation towards learning this language. The methods used in teaching have an important role in their motivation. With communicative and learner-centered approaches, a learner is no longer a container to be filled with knowledge distilled by the teacher but a person to take his or her learning in hand. If teachers place learners at the center of their learning, they should know about the latter's motivation as well as the factors that influence it. Teachers can create contexts that are more conducive to their learners' development by viewing students as individuals with their own interests and values.

The findings provide valuable insights on Congolese pupils' attitudes and motivation towards English learning. It will help teachers become more successful student facilitators because the study has provided them with some information concerning students' attitudes and motivation towards its learning. The results of this study are likely to stimulate teachers to think of some teaching techniques that are capable of arousing students' motivation to learn since these techniques will be based on their needs and interests.

Future studies could fruitfully explore this issue further by studying how other factors such as parents' education, sex, pupils' exam marks, and their previously learned languages influence their attitudes and motivation towards English and its learning.

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