

Features of Success Attribution in English as a Second Language (ESL) among Tertiary-level Learners in Malaysia

(Ciri-Ciri Anggapan Penyebab Kejayaan dalam Bahasa Inggeris sebagai
Bahasa Kedua di Kalangan Pelajar Universiti di Malaysia)

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ABSTRACT

Attribution is a term used to represent an act of establishing a reason for an event. There are many features of attribution that the learners tend to point to their achievement. This study was conducted to examine one of the causal attribution dimensions which are the locus of control; internal and external. It aims at providing answers to the level of English as a Second Language (ESL) achievement among the tertiary level learners and the features of their success attributions. The research herein consisted of a set of questionnaires to obtain responses on ESL students' achievement and their inclination when attributing the causes of their achievement. 236 students answered the questionnaire. Data were analysed after the reliability 0.870 of the instrument was gained. The descriptive statistics were used to address the research questions. The findings indicate that the majority of the students were moderate achievers and attributed their success to both external and internal factors. The inclination is seen towards the external locus. Both external and internal attributions were notably ascribed to achievement, particularly on the success in ESL and teacher which is an external factor played a noteworthy role in achievement. Understanding the levels and their attributes help to prepare academic performance and meaningful instructions in academic subjects taught in English.

Keywords: Model pengukuran Rasch, kemahiran proses sains, kesahan, kebolehppercayaan, penilaian sendiri

ABSTRAK

Atribusi adalah istilah yang digunakan untuk mewakili suatu tindakan untuk mewujudkan satu sebab kepada suatu peristiwa. Terdapat banyak ciri atribusi yang cenderung dirujuki sebagai penyebab kejayaan pelajar. Kajian ini dijalankan untuk mengkaji salah satu dimensi atribut kausal yang merupakan lokus kawalan; dalaman dan luaran. Ia bertujuan memberikan jawapan kepada tahap Bahasa Inggeris sebagai pencapaian Bahasa Kedua (ESL) di kalangan pelajar peringkat tinggi dan ciri-ciri atribut kejayaan mereka. Penyelidikan ini terdiri daripada satu set soal selidik untuk mendapatkan maklum balas terhadap pencapaian pelajar ESL dan kecenderungan mereka apabila menyenaraikan punca pencapaian mereka. 236 pelajar menjawab soal selidik. Data dianalisis setelah kebolehpercayaan 0.870 instrumen diperolehi. Statistik deskriptif digunakan untuk menangani soalan penyelidikan. Penemuan menunjukkan bahawa majoriti pelajar adalah pencapaian sederhana dan disebabkan kejayaan mereka untuk kedua-dua faktor luaran dan dalaman. Kecenderungan ini dilihat ke arah lokus luaran. Kedua-dua atribut luaran dan dalaman yang ditonjolkan adalah pencapaian, terutama pada kejayaan ESL dan guru yang merupakan faktor luaran yang memainkan peranan penting dalam pencapaian. Memahami tahap dan atribut mereka membantu untuk menyediakan prestasi akademik dan arahan bermakna dalam mata pelajaran akademik yang diajar dalam bahasa Inggeris.

Kata kunci: Atribusi, locus kawalan, atribusi dalaman, atribusi luaran, pencapaian ESL

INTRODUCTION

Achievement is anything which gives one a sense of self-importance and indicates capabilities in any activities viz. simple or complex. Successful achievement in the times of constant revolving 21st century world is imperative as learners are locked in a tight competition in the future job market. Employers also lamented on new entrants or tertiary education fresh graduates as shown deficiencies in important basic skills including writing in English and reading comprehension (Ministry of Higher Education

2012). All efforts should be made to ensure learners recognize their potential and overcome hitches that halt them from performing well and becoming competent for the 21st century workforce. This can be done when learners are allowed for self-assessment and share insights on the issues that centred on them. The effort can help to put forth the largely overlooked results on how they learn and make steady progress (Aboudan 2011). Progression and achievement in work and life in the 21st century revolve around the mastery of certain essential knowledge, expertise and skills. Learning outcomes are moved to

higher levels by weaving the interdisciplinary themes of 21st century into the core subjects such as English with the focus on reading and language arts (Partnership for 21st Century Skills 2009).

On the other hand, language is an important construct in a student's performance (Suppiah & Ong 2013). English is significant in many countries in the world as it opens up prospects to science and technology, diplomacies, and trading along with the status it accorded to its users (Thirusanku & Yunus 2012). Ex-colonies of the United States and the United Kingdom generally use English as a second language (ESL) which has received the importance as an official language. National schools in Malaysia offer 11 years of ESL subjects including proficiency and language arts syllabus. However, learners at university entry levels and fresh graduates apparently still portray an unsatisfactorily low level of proficiency. They demonstrate hardship in getting their ideas across when using English for job placement. This is made apparent when employers whine that university graduates are not proficient and as a result not employable. Yahaya et al. (2011) for instance reported the struggles of many law students in courts due to poor command of English. To properly understand achievement in ESL, catering for 21st century workforce and allowing for more success to take place, it must be understood that individuals understand the causes of the outcomes in a different way. Attributions as explanations for causes of specific outcomes are useful to be studied as they make behaviours over a situation more pronounced. It is indicated from the previous studies that attribution patterns correlated with perceptions of teacher-student relationships, self-efficacy, prerogative, justice and exhaustion (Mark et al. 2010). However, the attribution theory to explain learners' perceptions of a specific learning achievement is less discussed and underutilized. There is a need to explore their perceptions of the causes of their achievement in ESL courses considering the different features of attributions. Thus, this paper will report the findings from the data gathered through a survey with the tertiary level students' belief on: a) their level of ESL achievement; b) the traits of their success attribution. The findings of this study are hoped to be utilized by the universities in Malaysia and all the former United States and the United Kingdom colonies. The result will help them to keep up with the needs and preference in learning.

ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNING IN MALAYSIAN CLASSROOMS

The Malaysian education system has put emphasis on the importance of English language as a subject and passing is made compulsory. English language learning is an international agenda since its recognition as a global language appeared in 1997 (Crystal 1997). The language is regarded as important and certainly plays a wide range of roles in Malaysia. It is spoken by almost everyone from

all walks of life because of its communicative functions namely in commerce and national development (Omar 2001). Hence, being proficient in English allows one to participate and compete in the global economy as it is regarded as the language of commerce.

Unambiguously, each English language lesson has its goals which can be regarded as the ultimate success of the English Language Teaching (ELT) itself. Conversely, there are also issues along achieving the success. Proponents of this field of study had highlighted some factors that may benefit or otherwise set drawbacks to students such as the social, educational, and local factors. Hedge (2000) brought up examples of advantages like strong language awareness and positive attitudes. On the other hand, disadvantages on the students' parts are lack of exposure to the language, learning conditions and lacking in available language input and practice. Accordingly, input in ESL learning is the knowledge that learners employ in the making of acquiring the language either deliberately or unexpectedly. Ronald (1993) as cited in Robert (2007) defined input in ESL data in form-based or meaning-based that learners receive either in a formal or in a naturalistic situation (informal).

SUCCESSFUL LANGUAGE LEARNERS

A number of studies attempted to define the characteristics of successful language learners. Williams and Burden (2004) defined success operationally as 'doing well', as the students understood this more easily than 'succeeding'. They used the terms 'success' and 'doing well' interchangeably, as are 'failure' and 'not doing well'. Rubin and Thompson (1994) stressed that it is important in language learning that a language learner has their own reasons for learning a language for employment, educational, social and personal sake. Regardless of what level of education that a person receives, success is determined by the achievement of their goals for learning and fulfilling the task and evaluation of language learning successfully. Rubin and Thompson (1994) also stated that a successful language learner has to meet the objectives like speaking objectives; how well they want to speak in addition to reading, listening, and writing. Hence, successful learning also means a successful classroom engagement that contemplates students' perceptions.

By contrast, successful language learning can derive from types of motivation that students are engaged in and when they are able to perceive learning meaningfully. The psychology mainstream associates successful learning with motivation models (Thang et al. 2011). It occurs when learners are able to associate their disciplines or the learning situations in a meaningful way. Hyland (2009) states that in university, a successful language learner is determined by his/ her understanding of the subject content of their disciplines. The amount of engagement in the institutional practices can mean the success or failure for the students.

Schunk (1995) stated that a learner's self-efficacy that determines effort, persistence and flexibility affected them in their future achievement. Bandura (1993) explicated that the way an individual perceives (self-perception) himself/herself will affect their behaviour in two ways. It could be either engaging in the tasks that he feels competent or avoiding tasks that they are unable to execute successfully as they are less competent in the area. In other words, the way a person views their ability or effort can predict how their future achievement will be. A low self-efficacy would indicate low effort, low ability and low perseverance in a task that predicts low achievement.

ATTRIBUTION THEORY AND ITS RELATION TO LANGUAGE LEARNING: THE HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

A distinctive tenet that explains students' perception of their success is attribution theory (Weiner 1972, 1974). Attribution theory believes that learners' tendency to perform their future behaviour is highly influenced by their present self-perceptions. A person's belief shapes and predicts a subsequent complex classroom action (Yamat & Kartar Singh 2016). This theory basically claims that high achievers incline to accredit their success to their effort or high ability (Poverjuc 2010). Weiner (1972) explained that the theory is basically derived from the social cognitive and self-efficacy theory developed by Bandura (1986, 1997). According to Schunk (1995) this theory also stresses the idea that learners are strongly motivated by the satisfying result of their positive thoughts about themselves. Its original framework was based on the works of Julian Rotter and Fritz Heider which then promoted by Bernard Weiner over the last three decades (Weiner 2000).

JULIAN ROTTER (1954)

The work of Julian Rotter which is termed Expectancy Value Theory had observed three things in people. Firstly, people who are given the same situation for learning would learn different things. Secondly, people would respond as expected or less as expected or randomly to a fortification. Lastly, he believed that people would view a straight and strong relationship between the retribution and rewards they received and their behaviour.

The Locus of Control is a notion that is developed by this psychologist in the 1960s. It is a comprehensive principle about the primary causes of events in an individual's life. 'Loci' are referred to the internal and external loci. The Locus of Control signified the ability to do a decision making of a person is inclined (Rotter 1954).

FRITZ HEIDER (1944; 1958)

The first to develop a theory of attribution is Heider who was also a social psychologist. His concept of social

perception and phenomenal causality is believed to be the influential factor in the development of attribution theory (Frasher & Frasher 1981). Heider believed that attribution is the process of illustrating assumptions (Griffin 1994). The causes gained from the investigation of assumptions are used to answer 'why' questions and what bring about something to happen. As cited in Spencer (2008), besides looking at the distinctions between the internal and external factors, his attribution theory is developed based on three-stage process:

1. A perception of the action
2. A judgment of intention
3. An attribution of disposition.

This three-stage attribution process illustrated that one's perception of an event is digested through the three steps of thought process in the mind and it happens almost impulsively (Spencer 2008). As cited in Weiner (2000), Heider's theory gave focus on two determinants of behaviour which are "try" (effort) and "can" (ability).

BERNARD WEINER (1971)

Weiner (1972 & 2000) and others had further advanced the attribution theory for over the last three decades. His theory is stemmed from the belief that one's perceived reasons for performance be it success or failure contributed to his or her future and current motivation as well as success. One of Weiner's works replicated and furthered Lanzetta and Hannah's study on reward and punishment. Lanzetta and Hannah (1969) suggested some situations; a high failure resulted in a high punishment, failure could be ascribed to lack of effort or higher punishment is enforced when one was able to succeed failure was caused by the deficiency of effort. The latter failure that suggested a causal pattern was ascribed to more unconstructively that might affect alteration of causes.

Later, Weiner (1986 & 2000) developed an attribution theoretical framework that has been practiced as the current concept in the social psychology. His theory is largely focused on level of achievement and self-perceptions that explain how the achievement was accomplished or otherwise. As cited in Thang et al. (2011), there are three stages underlying his framework:

1. Behaviour must be observed/ perceived.
2. Behaviour must be determined to be intentional.
3. Behaviour may be attributed to either internal or external causes.

He also believed that future and present achievement is linked to causal attributions. Among the most influential factors that affect attributions are task difficulty, luck, effort and ability. The consistency is also seen in today's social psychology studies that are generally led by the attribution theoretical framework developed by Weiner (1986 & 2000). Weiner (2000) as cited in Thang et al. (2011), declared that the most influential factors that affect attributions are

ability, effort, task difficulty and luck. The three dimensions that lie beneath an attribution are as follow:

1. Locus of control (external vs. internal).
2. Stability (also known as changeability).
3. Controllability (for example: skills-controllable and luck-uncontrollable).

LOCUS OF CONTROL

As an illustration, several researchers have underlined the key internal and external as the contributing factors to success and failure. External can be summed as the factor contributed by outside or environment. Umoh (1991) stated that the outside control or influenced by the powerful hands or because of the fate and the chance they receive. On the other hand, internal is the inside strength and weakness of the individual which can also be said as one's dispositions or learners' tendency to exhibit a pattern of behaviour that is directed to their learning goal. Individuals with internal locus have better control of their own behaviour. The features of external and internal are also viewed under control or no control (Abisamra 2002). Figure 2 explains some features of attributions that are resulted from a combination of internal and external locus of control. The possibility of control with reference to external and internal locus as cited from Thang et al. (2011); Williams et al. (2004) are also depicted in Table 1.

TABLE 1. Locus of control

Locus	Internal	External
No control	Ability, level (satisfaction)	Luck, class, teacher, level, task, materials, circumstances, time, environment
Control	Effort, strategy, grade (interest), enjoyment, preparation, interest	-

ATTRIBUTION THEORY AND ACHIEVEMENT

Attribution theory used to challenge Artkinson's motivation theory. Dornyei (2003) highlighted subjective reasons that cause failures like the stumpy ability on the individual part, insufficient effort and incompatible learning strategies. Dornyei (2003) also claims that attribution plays its integral role in motivation in language studies as confirmed by Williams and Burden (1999). When studying causal attributions to success, the factor-analytic study revealed that the factors in relation to three dimensions namely locus of causality, stability and controllability are chiefly underlying the causes examined (Russell 1982).

METHODOLOGY

In this quantitative survey design, the foundational goal was to collect data representative of the population, early tertiary level learners in the east coast region. The study utilized the uses of information collected from the questionnaires that were distributed to generalize the findings from the drawn sample back to the population.

The population of this study consisted of students from semester 2 and 3 of Diploma of non-English majors in a public university in the east coast region of Malaysia. The simple random sampling was adopted in selecting the samples that is based upon actual population. The students in any field of study at this university have to take at least two consecutive English proficiency courses for diploma level. The contents of the courses are geared to prepare the students for a language proficiency test for Malaysia university admissions. This study has involved respondents that are demographically ranged from 18 to 20 years old, distributed by female outnumbering male students by 4:3. From the university record, there are 1990 students enrolled in semester 2 and 3 of 7 different diploma courses. The selected samples of this study were students who had successfully completed two English proficiency courses set by the university. The courses are designed for students with basic or intermediate levels of English proficiency. The courses intend to raise their level of proficiency in the language to higher intermediate level throughout the incorporation of four language components of skills; writing, reading, listening and speaking.

The simple random sampling technique was manipulated by the researcher to make sure that everyone in the selected population gets an equal chance to be selected. In order to ensure the respondents are adequately representing the population, the number from each subgroup was sampled by referring to Krejcie and Morgan (1970). The suggested sample was 320 students from the population. However, in the effort to avoid a shortage of response in future, 330 respondents were approached. Technically, the method of obtaining the sample was simple random sampling. Such technique would allow the study to cover a larger group and have a genuine sample for the relevant population. It allows a researcher to create a statistically sufficient number of respondents (Frankael et al. 2009). Table 2 depicted the number of samples selected to represent the whole population.

The actual data collection was administered after the study has achieved its reliability. Once the researcher has obtained the appropriate time for the data collection which is at the beginning of the semester, about 10 lecturers who taught two English courses were approached. This is to make the distributions and collection of completed questionnaires at ease. Initially, the lecturers involved were informed about the importance of completing the questionnaires and the confidentiality of responses that are only utilized for the purpose of this study. The questionnaires were distributed at the early semester as

TABLE 2. Sample size

Group 1	30
Group 2	30
Group 3	30
Group 4	30
Group 5	30
Group 6	30
Group 7	30
Group 8	30
Group 9	30
Group 10	30

part of the set induction. It allowed the students to reflect on their attribution of their previous performance. The list of students was requested from the University Record Unit. The questionnaires were completed by respondents during class time as part of a course experience questionnaire. With that, 330 questionnaires were distributed within three days.

The primary data was taken from the instrument which includes the demographic profile and information of the respondents. The feedback about their English language achievement and attributions of success were also gathered to achieve the main objectives of the research.

The discrepancy of justifications in relation to their achievement were analysed and presented. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 17.0 and Microsoft Excel software have been used in order to analyse the data in this study. A detailed explanation on statistical analysis conducted in this study is provided in the following section. The descriptive statistics was used to address the two research questions of the study. It allows the researcher to explain the information with index in forms of mean and median (Frankael et al. 2009). Frankael et al. (2009) also explained that, the indices that describe the characteristics of samples that were calculated by the descriptive analysis were set as the parameters of the study. For this particular study, the frequency distribution, mean, percentage and standard deviation were utilized to describe the background of the respondents, their level of achievement and the features of attribution that they attributed the most. Consequently, to determine the respondents' level of achievement, the level is a variable that has several levels were named good, moderate and weak levels. Next, to describe the frequency of attribution features, the identification of high, moderate and low were used ($1 - 1.66 = \text{Low}$, $1.67 - 3.33 = \text{Moderate}$ and $3.34 - 5 = \text{High}$).

RESULTS

RESPONDENTS' DEMOGRAPHIC PROFILE

Table 3 reports the summaries of demographic profile respondents who participated in this research. Based on the analysis presented in table, out of 236 respondents, 79 or 33.5% were male and the rest were female which represent 157 or 66.5%.

TABLE 3. Frequency and percentage result for demographic profile

Demographic Profile	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender		
Male	79	33.5
Female	157	66.5
Year of study		
Two	107	45.3
Three	129	54.7
Course		
English 1	107	45.3
English 2	129	54.7
Total	236	100

In terms of year of study, most of the respondents were from semester 3 which is 129 or 54.7%. The remaining 107 of the respondents were semester 2 students or 45.3% of the sample size. With regards to the English proficiency courses, 54.7% of the respondents have completed the English language preparation course for university admission (English 1) and it was followed by consolidating English language skills course (English 2) by 107 respondents or 45.3%.

IDENTIFYING THE LEVEL ENGLISH AS SECOND LANGUAGE (ESL) SUBJECT'S ACHIEVEMENT OF TERTIARY LEVEL STUDENTS

TABLE 4. Frequency and percentage of the respondents' english grades

Grade	Frequency	%
Good/high	20	8.5
Moderate	160	67.8
Weak/low	56	23.7
Total	236	100

Table 4 displays English subjects' scores among the university students who had enrolled in two English courses. The findings show that 67.8% (160) of the respondents have a moderate score. On the other hand, only 8.5% (20) of the respondents achieved good grades and 23.7% (56) of them achieve weak grades.

Further analysis was carried out to determine the level of English language component which comprises four skills namely listening, speaking, reading and writing.

The result in Table 5 shows four language components that were tested in the English proficiency courses. The finding shows that respondents perceived they did mostly well in the activities that were incorporated in the listening component (mean = 31.7, SD = 20.8). It was followed by speaking activities (mean = 23.6, SD = 11.5), reading activities (mean = 16.8, SD = 4.4) and the least

was in writing activities (mean = 15.8, SD = 10.7). Thus, listening was a skill that was highly scored and writing was the lowest.

TABLE 5. Mean and standard deviation of language component that ESL learners did mostly well in

Language component	Mean	Standard deviation
Listening	31.7	20.8
Speaking	23.6	11.5
Reading	16.8	4.4
Writing	15.8	10.7

EXAMINING THE FEATURES OF SUCCESS ATTRIBUTIONS
AMONG THE TERTIARY LEVEL ESL STUDENTS

TABLE 6. Mean and standard deviation of success attribution

Locus	Attribution features	Mean	Std. Deviation	Indicator
Internal	Enjoyment	3.89	0.831	High
Internal	Grade	3.665	0.648	High
Internal	Effort	3.547	0.795	High
Internal	Strategy	3.114	0.809	Moderate
Internal	Preparation	3.254	0.774	Moderate
Internal	Ability	2.975	0.726	Moderate
	Overall mean	3.4131		High
External	Teacher	3.87	0.627	High
External	Class	3.528	0.607	High
External	Task	3.453	0.637	High
External	Level	3.237	0.74	Moderate
External	Luck	3.025	0.601	Moderate
	Overall mean	3.5761		High

Mean score indicator: 1 – 1.66 (Low), 1.67 – 3.33 (Moderate) and 3.34 – 5 (High)

Table 6 displays the mean scores and standard deviation of the success attributions features as perceived by respondents. The findings show that the students perceived that their achievement in learning English as a second language was attributed to both internal and external factors. However, the respondents' success attribute was more inclined to external (where mean score = 3.5761) as compared to internal attribution (where mean score = 3.4131). This could indicate that the respondents depended largely on the reinforcement of others (Fakeye 2011). According to Weiner (1986) the attribution features are not only connected to internal and external locus but also stability and controllability. Therefore, respondents attributed the success that was inclined on teacher influence, class, task and luck are classified as external, stable and uncontrollable. On the other hand, respondents' attributed success to learn that was inclined on enjoyment was classified as internal stable and controllable. Effort,

strategy and preparation were classified as internal, unstable and controllable, whereas grades were categorized as internal, stable and controllable.

In examining external attribution that emphasizes on teachers (M = 3.87, std = 0.627), class (M = 3.528, std = 0.607) and task (M = 3.453, std = 0.637) show high mean scores. The remaining two external attributions of level (M = 3.237, std = 0.74) and luck (M = 3.025, std = 0.601) were moderate. Conversely, the mean score for internal success attribution such as enjoyment (M = 3.89, std = 0.831), grade (M = 3.665, std = 0.648) and effort (M = 3.547, std = 0.795) were high. They were followed by success attributions of strategy (M = 3.114, std = 0.809), preparation (M = 3.254, std = 0.774) and ability (M = 2.975, std = 0.726) that are moderately attributed to ESL achievement. Thus, teachers played the major contribution to their achievement, which was followed by the classroom and the activities that were conducted.

FINDINGS

In this section, the researcher recounted the study results and their applications to the two research questions. A finding was issued for each question and discussed herein. In short, most of the tertiary-level ESL learners in Malaysia who came from the beginner and intermediate proficiency levels performed moderately in English proficiency courses offered at tertiary level. They also attributed their achievement to the external factors.

Finding 1: What is the level of English language achievement among the tertiary-level ESL learners in Malaysia?

It was found that most of the students were having moderate ESL achievement. It was implied that the students attribute the causes of their achievement to the low self-efficacy related reasons. It concurs with Schunk (1995) that stated moderate and low performance could be related to low self-efficacy or the amount of effort, ability and preparation. Their performance is related to how much effort and time they put in the tasks. That explains one's perception of their ability and the effort they put in a task. Self-perception on the causes of their achievement could be that they are less competent, have insufficient ability and effort to execute the task successfully.

Hence, it was observed that most of the students did mostly well in listening and speaking compared to other activities that involved writing and reading. This suggests that the respondents were able to do well in activities that meeting the objectives of listening. They were capable of acquiring and appreciating the social and academic situations and recognized the functions of the spoken language when analysing and evaluating information. It was also implied that they were able to produce proper language expressions when required to participate in individual and group discussions. It seemed to be that the students were

more inclined to activities that required them to produce and receive the language verbally. In contrast, they were less able to use their existing knowledge to perform in reading and the least in writing activities. They were less capable of comprehending multiple types of reading passage such as linear and non-linear texts. The students were only able to write the slightest comprehensive paragraphs with the appropriate language and correct grammatically. They also did not use wide vocabulary and appropriate expression so well when required to meet certain intended purpose in writings.

Finding 2: What are the features of success attributions among the tertiary-level ESL learners in Malaysia?

In response to the second question, the mean score indicated that the respondents were inclined to the external factors. This finding suggests that when learning ESL, the students depended highly on situation or environment. This study is also in line with Mori et al. (2010) where they found out that the Japanese and Thai university students focused more on external factors for success such as teacher's encouragement and classroom atmosphere; enjoyment of the lesson and getting good grades. Teacher, class and task belong together as the most influential external attributions to achievement. Dimitriou (2005) declared that an effective learning environment is of supportive for learning. It is the teacher who organized and managed it with good classroom control and engaging activities. In addition, teachers are those who are helpful, able to make students feel liked, likable to the students and entertaining (Williams et al. 2004).

However, Williams, Burden and Al Baharna (2001) shows that inadequate teaching method, lack of support from family and teachers, poor comprehension and negative attitude were cited as reasons for failure attributions. In this sense, Weiner (2000) asserted that attributions come from students' self-perception, which in turn influences their expectancy, values, emotions and beliefs about their competence and motivation. Therefore, Weiner (1992) suggested that if an attribution is seen as external, unchangeable and outside of individual control, it will be likely to have a more consistent effect than one who perceived their success as internal, changeable and within the person's control. He further elaborated that attribution retraining is likely to focus upon altering negative feeling such as sense of learned helplessness to positive feeling of personal control.

CONCLUSION

The findings and discussion in this study guide to several implications in ESL teaching especially for the medium achievers. It should contemplate the attention to external factors that includes teacher influence, class environment, and suitable tasks difficulty and levels that fitting the students' ability. One would assume that success

should come from the individuals' effort and ability. An appropriate amount of external supports will result in high achievements in ESL learning. Hence, a teacher can consider an entrance survey at the beginning of a study term as it provides understanding of students' hopes and perceptions of a course. In the effort to produce successful language learners, further studies that provide insights on attribution aspects are desirable. The study was merely focused on gaining data from a quantitative design and Frankael and Wallen (2006) suggested that a blend of quantitative and qualitative design is recommended in educational researches.

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