

A STUDY OF STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING AND THEIR PROFICIENCY AT ELEMENTARY LEVEL

*Ayesha Liaquat, **Dr. Qudsia Fatima, ***Dr. Sonia Rafique

ABSTRACT

It is not possible to deny the importance of the English language as there is no field of life where it has no influence. This is the reason that the educational institutes have given it due consideration regarding academics and it is being taught as a compulsory subject as well as the secondary language in most of the countries across the globe including Pakistan. However, even being focused on exceptionally, the students are unable to show the desired performance regarding learning English. There may be many factors behind such a problem. However, this study focused on the students' attitudes and their effect on language proficiency. At first, there were 7 (50%) schools selected out of the total 14 schools. Then the data was collected from the 360 students (200 boys & 160 girls) of the selected schools including boys' and girls' schools. The data for English learning attitude has been collected with the help of a self-developed instrument "Students' Attitude towards English Scale (SAES)" consisting of 30 items ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree (five point Likert's rating scale). On the other hand, the students' language proficiency has been measured on a test "English Language Proficiency Test (ELPT)" developed by the researcher(s). The results revealed that there was a significant effect of English language learning attitude found on students' language proficiency.

Keywords: Students' attitude, proficiency, language learning, elementary students

Introduction

English has become the medium of communication across the globe as it has influenced every field of life. Either you talk about the simplest gadget like a calculator, or you talk about higher education, you need to seek the English language for both (Yasmin, Nadeem, Siddique, & Ali, 2020). Similarly, if any one desires to shop online even a tiny thing or an airplane, one needs to understand the English language as it is the language of international trade. If one does not understand the English language, it would not be possible for one to shop online (Astalini, Kurniawan, Kurniawan, & Anggraini, 2019). The majority of the online shopping or trading platforms use the English as a medium of trade (Muhammad & Mahmood, 2007). Therefore, English has gained a significant place among the other international languages. Similarly, it is the language of the technology. If the technology students want to be up to date regarding the new inventions and addition to the already available information and body of knowledge, they need to understand and learn the English language (Ahmed, 2015). Otherwise, it would be difficult for them to be up to dated.

*Principal, KIPS Education System

**Assistant Professor, University of Education, Lahore

***Principal, Mines Labour Welfare Department,

The reason behind the aforementioned is that although they could get the translated version of the concerning publication but it is the game involving the seconds and minutes (Ali & Siddiqui, 2021). This is not it, even the teachers and pupil teachers can not stay away from the English because almost all of the teacher education institutions offer the teachers' education programs in English language. So, if someone wants to be come a teacher in future, one needs to learn English language so that one could study in the English medium (Yasmin, Nadeem, Siddique, & Ali, 2020). Similarly, all of the employers including the Private sector as well as the Public sector demands the applicants to be well versed in English. The applicant must be good in English speaking and writing. Even in the interviews, those candidates are preferred for the selection who are the good speakers of English (Muhammad & Mahmood, 2007).

The new things are came to the known within the seconds and minutes. So, it is possible that there may come the updated version of the concerning information till they get the translated information of any recent piece of information (Zulfikar, Siddiqui, & Mahmood, 2020). The whole world acknowledges it due to its importance as it has become the language of technology, trade and a common way of communication among the nations as well (Alderson, 2008). A majority of the countries are using English language as a medium of communication worldwide (Al-Qahtani, 2013). One of its characteristics is, that it has provided the opportunity to the academicians as well as the researchers across the globe to communicate and share their knowledge (Al-Hazemi, 2000). They also get the opportunity to work collaboratively regarding the research and share the findings on a large scale. There are 1 billion and 500 million people including English speakers and those who are striving to learn it (Alexander, 2012; Yu, 2010). There is not a single school in Pakistan where English is not being taught as a compulsory subject (Alverini & Lucidi, 2008). Either there is a private or Government school, the students are required to learn the English language. Even the Urdu medium of indtructions have been replaced with the English medium of instructions. Now, there is no school where the Urdu medium syllabus is being taught. All over the Pakistan, the schools are implementing the English medium curriculum and the same syllabus. The Urdu medium curriculum is a thing of past now here in Pakistani schools (Yasmin, Nadeem, Siddique, & Ali, 2020).

The teaching of English is begun at Primary classes and goes on till the Higher Secondary classes. After this, the medium of instruction gets turned to English from Urdu (Astalini, Kurniawan, Kurniawan, & Anggraini, 2019). The higher education institutes also have ended up with the Urdu as a medium of instructions. They are only going with the English as amedium of instructions. They are using the curriculum only in the English language except that of the oriental programs like Urdu, Arabic, Persian and etc. As it is not possible for such subjects to be taught in other language than their own. Like Urdu can not be in English as it is the language in it self (Atek, Jusoh, Alias, Wahid, & Tahir, 2012). Similarly, the Arabic also can not be taught in English because Arabic is also a language in itself. The same is with the Persian. The examinations boards are also using the English as the medium of instructions and communications (Al-Hazemi, 2000).

English is a language which is recognized worldwide. It is not only the language being spoken across the globe. Rather, there are many countries where English is being spoken by the natives as their native language (Alverini & Lucidi, 2008). English is used as a medium of communication not only by its native speakers, but there are many countries like Pakistan where it is still implemented as a official language. Although it has been derecognized as an official language here in Pakistan but still it is in the practice (Atek, Jusoh, Alias, Wahid, & Tahir, 2012). Because of its importance worldwide, the English teaching is emphasized here in Pakistan. Even its training is given special weigh in the teaching institutes so the teachers become able to teach it effectively (Ahmed, 2015). The reason behind the fame and usage of English on a large scale is that it is the language being used while trade. On the other hand, even the international conferences are held while using the English language. It is also the language of research across the globe. Therefore, it is being given a special focus by the Pakistani Government (Braine, 2013; Jaliyya & Idrus, 2017).

As already it has been stated that the students are taught English from their very first class in school (Prep-class) to the higher secondary school certificate but the results are not upto the mark (August, Carlo, Dressler, & Snow, 2005). The students still remain unable to speak English as a language. Despite being taught for a long time, students' English is still poor (Choudhary & Gupta, 2015). It has come to known that the acquisition of language is influenced by different factors. One of them is the learning environment where the students are supposed to learn the language in. If the learning environment is positive and encouraging for the students to learn, the students would be at ease to not only learn it, rather they would practice it finely (Yasmin, Nadeem, Siddique, & Ali, 2020). However, if the learning environment is not favorable or conducive, it would impact the students' learning of language (Davidson & Fulcher, 2007). On the other hand, the students attitude is also one of the factors that influence the language learning. If the student starts to learn the language with positive attitude, the learning would be durable and effective. However, if the students starts learning the language with the negative attitude, the learning would be affected badly. In such a condition, the students' negative attitude needs to be addressed so that they could learn the language effectively (Al-Qahtani, 2013). Jaliyya & Idrus (2017) conducted qualitative research in which it has been concluded that the students' attitude has a meaningful relationship with their motivation and proficiency. Yu (2010) also concluded based on the results of his research that the Chinese government is weighing the English for teaching to the students. The students also have a positive attitude towards it. The more they spend time to earn it, the more they are proficient. Ahmed (2015) also exposed the students' attitude through his qualitative study, that it influences their learning proficiency meaningfully. Getie (2020) also concluded similarly to the aforementioned. The abovementioned studies are all from the foreign context. There is a grey area in Pakistan regarding the phenomenon under study. That is the reason the current research has been conducted here in Pakistan.

Statement of the Problem

Being a developing country, it a need here in Pakistan to seek the English language which has become an international language. In the present age of globalization, there is a dire need to

learn English regardless of one's task, job or business. If we try to remain isolated from English, it will not be a wise decision as it has overtaken almost every field and industry. It is not possible to ignore the English as to how could we communicate & compete the world in the absence of a common way of communication? So, considering the due importance of the English language, Pakistani educational institutions have been excelling maximum for their efforts to teach students the English language. However, it has been seen that despite of these efforts, the students remain unable to be proficient in the English language. The present study was conducted to investigate the relationship between students' attitudes and English proficiency to know if the attitude has any influence on language learning.

Objectives

The objective of this study was to find out the relationship between students' English language proficiency and their attitudes towards learning English.

Significance of the Study

English has been focused in our educational institutions so that the students may become able to acquire the updated knowledge, understand the world trend regarding education, be skilled as per the international manpower requirements and most of all could compete the world. However, as above mentioned that the desired results have not been attained yet. It has been revealed by the literature that the attitude has a meaningful effect on learning. So, this study will bring the students' attitudes into light regarding the acquisition of English which will help the educational institutions to tackle the concerned problem and develop the desired attitudes among students.

Methodology

This quantitative study has been conducted while including the secondary school students from Federal Government Educational Institutions (Cantts/ Garrisons) Lahore region. The sample was selected while utilizing Cluster sampling. There are total 14 schools in the Lahore region where elementary education is being offered. At first, there were 7 (50%) schools selected out of the total 14 schools. Then the data was collected from the 360 students (200 boys & 160 girls) of the selected schools including boys and girls' schools. The data for English learning attitude has been collected with the help of a self-developed instrument "Students' Attitude towards English Scale (SAES)" consisting of 30 items ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree (five point Likert's rating scale). On the other hand, the students' language proficiency has been measured on a test "English Language Proficiency Test (ELPT)" developed by the researcher(s). It comprises on 3 factors "Reading", "Writing" and "Grammar" each of which carried 10 MCQs. Both of the instruments have been validated through the experts' opinions followed by the pilot testing. The Cronbach's Alpha value for the former instrument was 0.68 whereas 0.73 for the later one which is acceptable.

Analysis of the Data

For the analysis of data, the Descriptive statistics (Mean and SD) whereas inferential (linear regression) were utilized that provided statistical support to describe the effect of students' attitude on their language proficiency.

Table 1 *Secondary School Students' Attitude towards Learning Language*

	\bar{X}	SD
Attitude for Language Proficiency	3.5426	1.046

Table 1 represents the central tendency through mean and SD, to define the students' language learning attitude. The values of \bar{X} and SD is 3.4360 and .74084 respectively.

Table 2 *Secondary School Students' Perception of Language Proficiency*

	\bar{X}	SD
Reading	5.5997	1.12378
Writing	4.5498	.93905
Grammar	5.1318	.45394
Total Language Proficiency	5.0938	.72409

Table 2 indicated the central tendency through mean and SD to define the students' language proficiency. According to these values, the students have a moderate level of language proficiency. As the overall values of \bar{X} and SD are 5.0938 and .72409 respectively.

Table 3 *Correlation between Students' Attitude Towards Language & Proficiency*

	Attitude	Language Proficiency
Attitude	1	.870 ^{**}
Language Proficiency		1

Table 3 shows the value of Pearson r to highlight the correlation regarding the students' attitude and English language proficiency. These results clarify that both aforementioned variables have positive as well as highly significant correlation, $r = .870$ and $p < .001$. Based on

these results, the null hypothesis “there is no significant relationship between students’ attitude and their English language proficiency” is rejected.

Table 4 *Effect of Students’ Attitude towards Language learning on their Proficiency*

R Square	Adjusted R Square	Df	F	Sig.
.757	.756	1	1112.220	.000

Results of the linear regression presented in table 4 reflect the effect of language learning attitude on the students’ language proficiency. The values of this table provide proof that 76% variance exists in students' attitude towards language and proficiency. Where $F = 1112.220$, $p < .005$, these results highlighted the model fitness.

Table 5: *Coefficient of Regression Reflecting the Effect of Language Learning Attitude on Language Proficiency*

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
Constant	2.96	.067		44.410	.000
Attitude	0.602	.018	.870	33.350	.000

Table 6 was about the language learning attitude coefficient against proficiency. Attitude beta = .870, $p < .005$ which showed that the students’ language learning attitude has a significant effect on their language proficiency. So, the null hypothesis is rejected based on these results.

Conclusion & Discussion

It has been concluded that the students have an attitude to learn English and also have a moderate level of language proficiency. In the same pattern, there exists a significant effect of language learning attitude on students’ language proficiency. The current study supported the findings of (Ahmed, 2015; Getie, 2020; Jaliyya & Idrus, 2017; Yu, 2010). So, it is recommended based on the results that the institutes should strive to develop a positive attitude among students regarding learning the English language.

REFERENCES

- Ahmed, S. (2015). Attitudes towards English Language Learning among EFL Learners at UMSKAL. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 6-16.
- Alderson. (2008). *Diagnosing Foreign Language Proficiency: The Interface Between Learning and Assessment, Language Assessment Quarterly*. London: A&C Black.

- Alexander. (2012). Fearless improvisation: A pilot study to analyze string students' confidence, anxiety, and attitude toward learning improvisation. *Update: Applications of Research in Music Education*, 25-33.
- Al-Hazemi. (2000). Lexical attrition of some Arabic speakers of English as a foreign language: A study of word loss. *The Internet TESL Journal*, 4-12.
- Ali, N. Z., & Siddiqui, D. G. (2021). Investigating the elementary school teachers' practices regarding classroom conflict management at Federal government educational institutions. *Elementary Education Online*, 3550-3555.
- Al-Qahtani, M. F. (2013). Relationship between English Language, Learning Strategies, Attitudes, Motivation, and Students' Academic Achievement. *Education in Medicine Journal*, 19-29.
- Alverini, & Lucidi. (2008). The academic motivation scale (AMS): Factorial structure, invariance, and validity in the Italian context. *Research gate*. Retrieved from https://www.researchgate.net/publication/286683014_The_academic_motivation_scale_
- Astalini, Kurniawan, Kurniawan, & Anggraini. (2019). Evaluation of Student's Attitude toward Science in Indonesia. *Open Journal for Educational Research*, 1-12.
- Atek, Jusoh, Z., Alias, Wahid, & Tahir. (2012). Students' Attitudes towards the English Proficiency Enhancement Programme. *International Journal of Education*.
- August, Carlo, Dressler, & Snow. (2005). The critical role of vocabulary development for English language learners. *Learning Disabilities Research & Practice*, 50-57.
- Braine. (2013). *Non-native educators in English language teaching*. Routledge.
- Butler. (2004). What level of English proficiency do elementary school teachers need to attain to teach EFL? Case studies from Korea, Taiwan, and Japan. *TESOL Quarterly*, 245-278.
- Choudhary, & Gupta. (2015). Teaching communications skills to medical students: Introducing the fine art of medical practice. *International Journal of Applied and Basic Medical Research*.
- Damiani, A. J. (2003). *The Grammar Translation Method of language teaching*. London: Longman.
- Davidson, & Fulcher. (2007). The Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) and the design of language tests: A Matter of Effect. *Language Teaching*, 231-241.
- Getie, A. S. (2020). Factors affecting the attitudes of students towards learning English as a foreign language. *Cogent Education*, 1-37.
- Jaliyya, F. G., & Idrus, F. (2017). EFL Students' Attitudes and Perception Towards English Language Learning and Their English Language Proficiency: A Study From Assa'adah Islamic Boarding School, Indonesia. *Journal of Education and Learning*, 219-228.
- Muhammad, A., & Mahmood, A. (2007). The Status and Teaching of English in Pakistan The Status and Teaching of English in Pakistan. *Language in India*.

- Yasmin, T., Nadeem, M., Siddique, G. K., & Ali, M. S. (2020). The Effect of Teachers' Language Speaking Anxiety on their Performance in English. *Review of Education, Administration and Law (REAL)*, 285-291.
- Yu, Y. (2010). *ATTITUDES OF LEARNERS TOWARD ENGLISH: A CASE OF CHINESE COLLEGE STUDENTS*. (Unpublished Doctoral Thesis) The Ohio State University.
- Zulfiqar, M. S., Siddiqui, G. K., & Mahmood, S. (2020). A Comparison between Online and on-campus Classes: Taking University Students' Perspective. *Review of Education, Administration and Law (REAL)*, 157-163.