

STUDENT'S ATTITUDE TOWARDS LEARNING ENGLISH AT SECONDARY SCHOOL LEVEL IN PUNJAB PROVINCE DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

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Abstract

The educational literature provides information about students' attitudes and interests as an important component in learning second language competencies. The primary goals of the study were to explore the students' attitudes towards learning English as a subject at secondary school level and to find out the difference between male and female students' attitude towards learning English at secondary school level. The current study was descriptive in nature and the survey technique was applied well in the research to achieve the research objectives of the study. The population of the study comprised of all the secondary school students in Punjab province as a large group. A random sample strategy was used to choose students from related schools in concerned districts i.e. Multan and Vehari. In the study, data was collected from 310 secondary school students from the districts of Multan and Vehari as a sample. According to the findings of this study, female secondary school students having significantly higher attitude towards learning English than male secondary school students. Teachers should also motivate and encourage students to explore and enhance their talents in learning and speaking English during classroom activities such as oral communications. Listening, speaking, reading, writing, and creating are all important aspects of learning the English language.

Keywords: Students' attitude, Learning English, Secondary schools

Introduction

Language is essential for everyone in the community to learn. Because Almighty Allah has endowed individuals with linguistic abilities, the primary distinction between humans and other creatures is the ability to speak and understand a language. Language serves as a gateway to the learning process. People use it as they see fit. When they do not understand anything, they ask about it and get the appropriate answer. English is now the global language. It is a foreign language but has global significance. The English language is widely spoken, read, and understood. People throughout the world converse and share the same language. English is now primarily acknowledged as the language of success. Viruses like COVID-19 spread like an epidemic over the world, according to Harapana, Itohd, Yufifika, Winardif, Keamg, Te, Megawatii, Hayati, Abram, Wagner, and Mudatsir (2020). It affects the entire world population, but mainly those directly or indirectly involved in Education.

According to Chalachew & Lakshmi (2013), Education is a powerful tool for changing children's behavior to meet society's needs. Student attitude is an essential part of learning and should be included in second language learning pedagogy. An attitude toward learning influences actions such as picking books to read and learning new words. Students can achieve a lot in Education if they have a good approach towards any subject. Language learning interacts with the setting in which students grew up. Positive and negative attitudes both have an impact on language acquisition success.

The COVID-19 epidemic affects early childhood schooling, says Spiteri1 (2021). For a child to create a robust structure, the early years of Education should include real-life sensory experiences. It is also stated that COVID -19 negatively impacts students' attitudes towards learning at the elementary level. Students develop a habit of not doing activities that require effort. Their minds go awry, and their creativity is lost. Primary school students require ongoing learning commitments. Closer schools affect students' attitudes towards learning English.

As a result, learning a language is critical in both educational and occupational fields. The foreign language allows the children to express their unique perspectives in school activities. They should be familiar with adequate terminology and vocabulary systems and their proper usages to fully comprehend the curriculum. It is the language that enables students to acquire knowledge. It is the means of communication between

classmates and their tutor. We know that English, the foreign language, has a high level of comprehension in English, Technology, and Literature. One who aspires to such qualities should be fluent in the English language and literature. Language is fundamental in the learning process. It is expected that students will be able to interpret the English language thoroughly. They should be able to understand what their teacher is saying. They should also be able to remember suitable responses raised by their teacher throughout classroom activities.

A person's interest influences his or her attitude from time to time. A person will be more driven to study a language if he enjoys learning it. For example, we can examine the perspectives of students. It is also possible to change one's way of thinking. When it comes to some courses, the teacher should influence some students' awful attitudes. According to Alkaff (2013), students' behavior can significantly impact their ability to learn. Learning is more effective for students who have a positive attitude toward English learning and less effective for students who have a negative attitude toward English learning. Learning English necessitates a positive attitude. Learning English necessitates a positive outlook on life.

English has become the language of communication, trade, and technology all across the world. As a result, it is the most commonly spoken language on the planet. During the reign of the British Empire, A new educational system was developed to teach the indigenous peoples of the subcontinent English. During that time, our beloved homeland was an essential part of the Indian subcontinent. The language is used to investigate the literature. The English language has gained popularity as a result of literature. There is no doubt that children whose first language is not English have a more difficult time understanding English literature, and this is a fact. It is a significant concern for Pakistani youngsters. English is taught in Pakistani classrooms as a second language. This fact is a significant impediment to learning and understanding English. As a result, many people are hesitant to learn English.

There are various research programs underway in the developed world, and we need to interact with them to extend our generation's horizons. The younger generation must become acquainted with the available knowledge via English. The current researcher believes that attitudes toward learning English as a foreign language among students should be explored. It sets the study apart from previous studies, which focused on determining students' attitudes toward learning English rather than their actual attitudes toward learning English. A current study will be done during COVID-19 to assess students' opinions regarding learning English as a second or foreign language.

There has recently been much discussion about attitude. The bulk of research has shown that a student's attitude toward learning is a crucial learning component. For a multitude of reasons, research studying students' attitudes toward learning during COVID-19 is essential. Here are a few examples. It is stated that one's attitude toward learning is the first aspect that influences learning. In the second attitude, learning and future accomplishment are inextricably linked to success and achievement. When a teacher teaches pupils how to live a healthy lifestyle, she is also communicating knowledge, ethical values, and traditions and suggesting solutions to problems that exist in communities and educational institutions. Unfortunately, the shutdown of schools and move to distant learning during the COVID-19 pandemic has shifted how teachers interact with their students. The epidemic not only changes the communication method between teacher and student, but it also changes the learner's attitude about learning.

Because of the ongoing COVID-19 epidemic, students, teachers, and parents have encountered significant challenges. Even though educational institutes are being constructed following the current COVID-19 condition, the study is doubtful. Because both teachers and students are currently suffering due to the epidemic, pupils' inability to arrange their study schedules led to bad attitudes. Students appear to have a negative attitude toward English study, notably during COVID-19. COVID-19 is a time when pupils' views are not likely to improve. Whether they are primary, middle, high, higher secondary, college, or university students, everyone is affected. While the COVID-19 epidemic is in full swing, the purpose of this research is to investigate students' perceptions toward learning English as a foreign language in school.

Education can be used to affect students' behavior. A positive attitude is essential for learning and for learning a second language. The attitudes of the students influence their book selection. Similarly, students' attitudes significantly impact their capacity to learn and communicate in a second language; The student who holds the characteristics above may apply for this strategy. Despite this, we are unable. Children who grow up in an academic atmosphere have a more optimistic outlook on life than those who do not. It implies that the environment has a significant impact on language learning. In other words, attitudes have a significant influence on one's capacity to learn a language. Learning English is one of the most challenging challenges for youngsters in both public and private high schools. Because it is a second language, it presents a variety of Secondary school students' opinions on learning English at public and private institutions.

Research Objectives

1. To explore the students' attitudes towards learning English as a subject at secondary school level
2. To find out the difference between male and female students' attitude towards learning English at secondary school level.

Review of Related Literature

Various philosophers and thinkers have defined learning, but the essential component is changing the learner's behavior. As a result, learning is an essential component of education. Getting information is vital to the human race's survival. Continuous learning leads to the advancement of ideas in society. Many knowledges and learning activities fundamentally change the person. God gave human children a memory system like a computer. Teachers lectured, and students practiced environmental education. This type of learning becomes part of their knowledge. In this approach, knowledge influences student behavior positively.

Hughes (2020) claims that the COVID-19 pandemic has impacted children's education and produced gaps in study. Forced disruption of school-based social contact. A global study by Patston, Kennedy, Jaeschke, Kapoor, Leonard, Cropley, and Kaufman (2021) found that COVID-19 dramatically changed secondary students' attitudes toward learning English as a foreign language. Students are forced to learn independently, often using remote technologies, without the social nuances of direct instructor contact found in traditional classrooms.

The COVID-19 epidemic has impacted many aspects of people's lives, including education, economy, and equality. Students have seen a significant shift in their learning styles. A student's attitude toward learning can influence academic success. Due to the difficulty of learning a language other than one's mother tongue, pupils' attitudes toward English learning may diminish during the COVID-19 epidemic. In this pandemic, little is known about COVID-19 and Students' attitudes on studying English.

It affects students' attitudes in learning English, says Kaharuddin (2020). The impact of studying English as a foreign language on students' attitudes and learning English is also examined. When plotting a graph reflecting students' attitudes for learning English, the contributing attitude in face-to-face and online learning is noteworthy. Besiegement of English as a foreign language (EFL) suffered during the COVID-19 epidemic.

According to Tavail (2009), learning alters a student's outlook on personal history, knowledge activities, and behavior to specific situations. Language is an essential tool for

Students. Instead of a second language, students learn better when using their mother tongue. The usage of one's native tongue does help understanding educational situations. They grasp their subjects easily in their native language. A few words or phrases do not show systematic command of a language. To learn much knowledge, one must grasp, elaborate, and use language thoroughly.

English is frequently used as a second language in Pakistan and many other nations. It is now the language of English business and technology. It is vital for research. It aids the researcher in finishing their research. Learners must have a solid desire to study the language's foundational elements. Teachers must correct students who commit grammatical errors. It provides him with specialized training to master the second language.

Oliveria (1997) describes in full male and female pupils' behavior. Her research found that female students are more interested in English language acquisition than male pupils. However, the boys are not serious about learning English. Pakistan, a developing country, is in a similar situation. Male students have more opportunities to learn a second language, but they do not like it. Most male students waste time on other things.

Female students are more cautious than male pupils, according to Hashwani (2008). Also, males' and females' mental health differs. Female students are more motivated to learn English than male students. Girls learn faster than boys. It describes how a person acts in a situation. Mental and emotional state observations are made visually or audibly, and qualified instructors give lectures in or out of the classroom. Attitude also refers to how people react and feel emotional and mental situations.

Mehrens and Lehmann (1987) state unequivocally that educational activities have an impact on student attitudes. The environment also affects students' attitudes about learning a language, especially a second language. These activities indicate students' views about language acquisition. The societal natives also influence the student's attitude toward language acquisition and civility. Those who are illiterate may promote a negative attitude towards acquiring language learning skills.

A positive attitude considerably impacts language acquisition skills, say De Bot, Lowie and Verspoor (2005). Positive attitudes should be improved to guarantee student achievement. Oliveria (1997) values senior members of the social environment's recommendations to help language learning go smoothly. Environmental amenities help second language learners by providing appropriate pronunciations of native speakers.

It is noteworthy that Abidin, Mohammdi, and Alzwari (2012) link feelings and reactions to personal behavior and attitude. An enthusiastic student studying a second language has shown a great desire to learn the second language. Positive attitudes toward learning a second language are necessary since negative attitudes hinder learning and enhancing second language skills. It is a mental condition that includes one's sentiments and actions in a scenario. As a result, a positive outlook contributes to effective language learning. The learners' motivation might strengthen and generate it—a second language learner's ability to rely on elders and their abilities.

Cszer and Dornyei (2005) stated that attitude towards learning second language matters. The ability to learn a second language improves with optimism. Dornyei and Otto (1989) feel that personal reflection and a positive attitude are essential to establish and strengthen learning a second language. Assertiveness is essential to perform and attain objective goals when studying English as a second language. Gardener, Lalonde, and Macpherson (1985) discovered that motivation influenced learning. When older people encourage their children to study a second language, positive attitudes develop, and the language is mastered faster.

A significant level of willingness is required to learn a second language. It is because Students are curious about the language. Oliveria (1997) claims that female students have enough time at home to study because they do not go outside much. As a result, they will be more successful in reaching their subject objectives. Because boys spend time outside, they have less time to study, learn, and memorize. Cognitive and behavioral aspects influence student attitudes, but student attitudes are crucial when holistically learning a second language (Gajalakshami, 2013).

Soleimani (2013) defines *attitude* as a mental state that drives pupils to explore new things related to their academic goals. Students, on the other hand, have mixed feelings. In contrast, a negative attitude hinders their ability to learn, memorize, and comprehend properly. The majority of research shows an important link between learning styles and language acquisition and academic achievement. Styles of teaching and learning are divided. Both strategies are vital in good secondary teaching and learning.

Dunn, Dunn & Price (1989) claims that teaching and learning styles are intertwined; students' learning styles should be heavily weighed to study effectively. Similarly, teaching and learning styles must be matched to complete the procedure in a short period. Learning styles are vital, say Damavandi, Mahyuddin, Elias, Daud & Shabani (2001). Academic success is influenced by learning styles. Also, pupils with successful learning styles that match teaching methods and textbook approaches outperform their peers.

Research Methodology

The research explores students' attitudes toward learning English at the secondary school level in Punjab province, and Ezeani (2013) argues persuasively that descriptive research work is used to collect data entirely to understand the current situation effectively. The survey method was used to collect data for the study, which was descriptive. The study population in Punjab province included all secondary school students in the 9th and 10th grades.

The study's sample consisted of 1000 individuals, 450 female secondary school students, and 550 male secondary school students, and the sample was chosen using a basic random sampling procedure. Researchers obtained permission from secondary school principals to collect relative information from students in the ninth and tenth grades, respectively.

Initially, the questionnaire consisted of 20 items structured on a five-point scale. The study's instrument was pilot tested for validity and reliability. Several questionnaire items were rewritten during the validity and reliability procedure, and the final questionnaire was administered to the appropriate population.

Permission was obtained from the Headmasters/Headmistresses of the selected schools before the researchers administered the questionnaires to the individuals. The researchers collected data on an individual basis. The cooperation of the instructors was outstanding. All completed questionnaires were returned to the researchers within a specified time frame. The raw data was copied to an MS Excel sheet before being entered into SPSS for analysis. The mean and standard deviation of the data was determined using descriptive statistics. In addition, the t-test is used for inferential statistics. Behind the tables that displayed the facts, interpretation was also provided.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Table 1

Students' attitude toward learning English

Sr#	Statement	MS	SD
1	I study English subject at home regularly	4.05	1.18
2	I enjoy learning English since it is an interesting subject.	4.44	0.90
3	I grasp the English lessons taught in class by the teacher	4.31	0.87

4	In my own words, I can explain English lessons	3.52	1.98
5	During class sessions, I can focus on the English lesson	4.49	0.93
6	I review the English lesson at home daily	4.20	1.00
7	I finish my homework in English before playing	4.02	1.21
8	In English class, I experience real joy	4.17	1.03
9	I often tie the past experiences to fresh English lessons	3.45	1.20
10	I understand essential points during English lessons	4.14	0.99
11	I wholly focus on the topic of English class.	4.49	0.87
12	I usually assign English most of the time, as I prefer it more than other subjects	4.28	2.07
13	My desire to succeed in English motivates me to put in more effort	4.49	0.85
14	English courses are a boring source for me	2.27	1.34
15	The lessons taught in English classes are not interesting.	1.67	1.21
16	I cannot communicate in English in classroom	1.97	1.22
17	I enjoy discussing English themes after school.	3.85	2.02
18	I do not want to do my English homework/s.	2.17	1.27
19	I like English lessons.	4.35	1.78
20	I enjoy English novels and news.	4.10	1.25

Table 1 shows students' attitudes toward learning English in secondary school in Punjab province, with mean scores ranging from 1.67 to 4.49 and standard deviations ranging from 0.85 to 2.07. The analysis's mean score ranged from 1.67 to 4.49, with a standard deviation of 0.85 to 2.07. According to the inquiry results, the mean score (4.05) and standard deviation (1.18) of Item 1 suggested that more than 70% of students consistently study English at home. While more than 60% of the students enjoyed learning English because it is a fascinating subject, 40% were uninterested. A significant proportion of students indicated that they comprehended the English listening skills that the teacher had given them in the classroom. Item 4 demonstrated that the vast majority of students could describe English lessons in their own words. According to the results, in terms of Item 5, the data show that more than 60% of respondents focus their English lessons during class sessions. According to Item 7, more than 70% of students complete their English homework before playing, while more than 65% report having fun in English class according to Item 8.

Furthermore, the clear majority of respondents agree that students benefit from prior experiences to refresh their English class curriculum. Item 11 said that most students agree that they should entirely focus on the themes and subjects discussed in their English lesson. More than 70% of students disagreed with the premise that English classes are boring for them, and the same ratio was obtained for Item 15 because more than 70% of students disagreed with the statement that the lessons offered in English classes are

boring. Students enjoyed discussing English-related issues after school, with over 75% doing so. When asked if they disliked English homework, more than 70% of students said no, while more than 80% said they appreciated English classes. Moreover, 80%, on the other hand, reported that they enjoyed reading English novels and following English news headlines.

Table 2

Attitude towards Learning English (Gender-wise)

Gender	N	Mean	SD	T	P
Female	450	106.41	10.67	9.78	.000
Male	550	102.52	13.01		

Table 2 displays the responses of students to the question concerning their attitude toward learning English by gender. The table shows that the t-value (9.78) was statistically significant at $p < 0.05$ for all male and female respondents. Because the null hypothesis was demonstrated to be wrong, it is concluded that female students ($M=106.41$, $SD=10.67$) have a much more favorable view of the value of studying English than male respondents ($M=102.52$, $SD=13.01$).

Findings, Conclusions and Discussion

The children's reactions to the question of when they should read English. It was shown that most students prefer to perform their homework at home. They create their own study schedules that are consistent with their domestic responsibilities. Every Student has a wide range of activities to choose from at home. As a result, most students schedule time to study English-related subjects. Students' interest will grow because of regular study, and the scheduling component will aid in the students' English acquisition. It has been revealed that most students' responses suggest a desire to learn about English as a topic. They understand the importance of English. In the field of technology, the laws, principles, and theories of the English language are used. English has become increasingly interesting in communication domains such as the internet, mobile phones, television, and so on. Most students are familiar with the English language because of the benefits of communication in today's environment. It has been established that most students in the classroom demonstrate that they understand the English lesson offered by their teacher. The teacher gives a lecture about English, which is interspersed with various topic-related assignments. The maximum quantity of content is deleted from trials in English. As a result, experiment-based subjects pique the audience's curiosity. Because of the trials undertaken in language schools, students' attitudes toward studying

the English language improve. Most students remain engaged on their subject during the whole class hour, according to research. Because they understand that the topics covered in class are valuable to their learning. According to the data, when students were asked if they edit their lesson daily, most of them stated that they always alter their lecture. Students who revise their lessons daily demonstrate a stronger command of the English language. Most Students finish their coursework before going to play because they recognize that their work is more important than their enjoyment of the game. Most respondents claimed that previous concepts aided them in learning new ones, allowing them to learn more quickly. However, because they lack the appropriate terminology and information, a few of them declare that the new lesson has nothing to do with the preceding one. Most students replied positively in this survey, and they realized that during English lectures, the most important components needed to be stressed and concentrated on since they had new thoughts and defined what was in the topic. Most responders have intense concentration on the problem during class, while a minority proportion anticipate they will be unable to sustain this concentration for the duration of the session.

Most respondents express a high interest in the subject of English, thinking it to be more interesting than the arts and other subjects in which they are engaged. It has been established that most students do not find the English topic to be boring and that they enjoy learning English in general. Most students stated that they continually counselled their professors about problems they were having with English subjects they were having difficulty understanding. Most students believe that the points mentioned by the teacher during class have aided them in their grasp of the content. Most students disagree with the statement that English classes are boring, leading to the conclusion that English is a fascinating subject to learn about. One of the reasons why most students choose English as a subject for further study is because of this. Most students disagree with the notion that they were unable to comprehend English lessons after class, suggesting that students can comprehend English classes after the lecturer has completed his or her presentation.

It has been shown that most children like discussing English issues after school. They enjoy addressing their worries and learning from one another after school, which may be advantageous to their academic growth. Most students disagree with the statement that English topics are not interesting to discuss. They constantly look forward to discussing English-related subjects after school. It has been revealed that most Students have little desire to complete their homework at home. They are frequently eager to finish their English homework tasks at home on a regular basis. When questioned about their preferences, most students say they enjoy English classes. Because they understand the relevance of English. Following an examination of student responses about the selection of English topics, it was determined that most students believe that parents have an

important part in picking which English subjects their children would take in school. Following an examination of the responses, it was discovered that students felt that having high English skills is essential for their careers. Most students respond positively, believing that having high English skills will help them in their future professions.

When male and female students' attitudes toward English learning were compared, the t-value (9.78) was found to be statistically significant at $p < 0.05$. As a result, we may conclude that female students ($M=106.41$, $SD=10.67$) are more enthusiastic about learning English than male respondents ($M=102.52$, $SD=13.01$).

When female and male students were compared, it was discovered that female students had a more favorable attitude toward studying English. Students develop a reading schedule for English courses at home and demonstrate a desire to master English subjects throughout their academic careers. Most people who responded to the survey questions understood their English classes.

Following the investigation, it was discovered that students were able to interpret their lessons in their own terms. Students concentrate on the English lesson for the duration of the class and seek to revise the English lesson at home daily. Students have always attempted to complete the English homework before going to play. English class is a source of great joy for the students. It was observed that only a small percentage of students could relate previously taught lessons to new English lessons, and that half of the students could only understand English teachings.

During English class, most of the students were able to focus on the topic. Similarly, students devote a significant amount of time to the English topic and communicate English themes with their lecturers if they are unable to understand their lessons and have a strong desire to succeed in the English subject. A few students are bored with their English classes.

Students should contact their teachers if they do not understand English classes or the concepts provided in the lessons. Only a few students claimed difficulty comprehending the English sessions, even though the vast majority of students expressed an interest in English studies.

The study found that female students were more enthusiastic about learning English than male pupils. The results for ninth and tenth graders were comparable. Greenfield (1996) claims that female students prefer English to male student and it is also found that female eighth and ninth graders are more enthusiastic about learning English than male students.

It was also revealed that urban and rural pupils approach English learning similarly. Lahore Students were more enthusiastic about learning English than Sargodha students. Students in the eighth grade have a more positive attitude toward learning English than

students in the ninth and tenth years. According to Hadden and Johnstone (1983), students' opinions toward English vary with grade. Students develop a habit of reading English subjects at home and studying English throughout their academic careers. Most respondents understand their English lessons. It was decided that students could not teach on their terms. Students focus on the English lesson throughout the class and practice it regularly at home. Before going out to play, students finish their English homework. The students enjoy the English class. Few pupils could apply previous learning to new English lessons, and half could only absorb English lessons.

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