



Understanding attitudes in English language learning: A holistic review

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Abstract

This comprehensive literature review examines attitudes towards English language learning across diverse contexts, demographics, and educational settings. Drawing insights from a multitude of studies employing varied methodologies—surveys, interviews, statistical analyses—the review explores factors influencing attitudes, including cultural nuances, instructional approaches, and societal perceptions. Key findings highlight the intricate relationship between attitudes and language proficiency, emphasizing the pivotal role of fostering positive mindsets for effective language acquisition. Synthesizing these insights, this review aims to inform educators and policymakers about tailoring strategies to create conducive learning environments and optimize English language acquisition for diverse learners.

Keywords: Language acquisition, English language learning, attitudes, cultural influences, instructional methodologies, language proficiency

Introduction

The global significance of the English language has surged, establishing itself as a vital tool for cross-border communication, business interactions, and media connectivity. It holds a pervasive presence as a medium of instruction in various parts of the world, including India, despite the substantial role indigenous languages play. Across Indian states, educational curricula predominantly employ English, particularly in professional domains like medicine, engineering, and law, influencing textbooks and coursework. The reach of English extends to rural areas, with translated literary works and frequent integration of English words into daily conversations.

In India, fluency in English is a source of pride, with even young children exhibiting grammatical accuracy and ease in using the language. From the start of the day with 'good morning' to its end with 'good night,' English pervades daily interactions. Competitive exams, government notices, and commercial establishments predominantly use English. It is universally acknowledged that mastering the English language holds immense value. Regardless of gender, location, educational background, or area of study, individuals are actively striving to develop a positive outlook towards learning English. This review aims to explore past studies examining students' attitudes towards the English language.

Findings and Discussion

In today's globally interconnected world, the significance of English proficiency extends beyond borders, impacting communication, education, and professional success. This literature review delves into numerous studies exploring attitudes towards learning English across diverse contexts, demographics, and educational settings.

Through varied methodologies like surveys, interviews, and statistical analyses, these studies investigate how factors such as cultural influences, teaching methods, and societal perceptions shape learners' attitudes. They reveal the

intricate relationship between attitudes and language proficiency, highlighting the importance of fostering positive mindsets for effective language acquisition.

By synthesizing these findings, this review aims to distill key insights. Understanding the complex interplay of attitudes in language learning can guide educators and policymakers in tailoring strategies that create conducive learning environments and optimize English language acquisition for diverse learners.

In the article, 'Attitudes towards the English Language among Agriculture Students: A Case Study' by Kifayatullah Khan, Yousaf Hayat, Syed Munir Ahmad and Wasal Khan, a combined qualitative and quantitative approach was employed to examine the attitudes of 30 agricultural students from Peshawar towards the English language. The study utilized a 30-item Likert scale attitude questionnaire, semi-structured interviews, and SPSS version 20.0 for analysis. The findings revealed that there is no significant difference in attitudes based on gender, although female students exhibited slightly more positive attitudes toward the English language. Notably, all students displayed positive attitudes toward English.

Aily Carrillo-Pongasi and Michael John A. Jamora from Sorsogon State University, Philippines, in their research article titled 'Attitudes of Maranao Learners towards English Language Learning,' highlighted that 10 Maranao learners, selected through purposive sampling, exhibited a tendency to accept mediocrity despite facing numerous influencing factors. However, they also showed a commitment to progress towards achieving proficiency in the language.

In the article titled, 'A Study on the Correlation between the Attitudes of Pre-Medical Students and their Competency in English Essay Writing,' Sadia Iqbal, Dr. Umbreen Ishfaq, Dr. Tehseen Tahir, and Sadiqa Kiani gathered data from 320 male and 228 female students through a survey. The study revealed a correlation between the attitudes of second-year Pre-Medical students in Haripura district and their proficiency in essay writing. Additionally, it recommended

that teachers create opportunities for students to participate in activities aimed at enhancing their language proficiency (SADIA IQBAL, 2023) ^[22].

In the article titled 'Prediction of Attitudes Towards the English Course by Social-Emotional Competence and Intercultural Awareness of Students,' Fatma SARIKAYIŞ and İbrahim TUNCEL discovered that among a total of 1864 students in 6th to 8th grade, stratified data were collected using a relational survey approach. The researcher found that two variables selected by the researcher significantly predicted students' attitudes toward learning the English language.

The article titled 'Gender Difference in Students' Attitude Towards the English Language in Selected Senior High Schools in the Sunyani Municipality of the Bono Region of Ghana,' authored by Hawa-Kullu Mohammed, utilized both qualitative and quantitative methods. The data, collected through random sampling, was analyzed using SPSS version 22. The study concluded that female students exhibited a more positive attitude toward the English language compared to male students. Additionally, single-sex schools demonstrated a greater orientation toward improving language skills compared to coeducational schools.

Anita Habók, Andrea Magyar and Gyöngyvér Molnár in their article named, 'Investigating the Relationship Among English Language Learning Strategies, Language Achievement, and Attitude' have shown how proficiency levels influence language learning strategies among 1,653 secondary students who belong to Hungary. Using a tailored questionnaire based on Oxford's model, it found significant differences in strategy use between proficiency groups. Surprisingly, even with reported low strategy use, it strongly correlated with students' attitudes towards learning English and their language achievements. The results underscore the vitality of strategy-focused research in language education and advocate for integrating strategy teaching into language instruction.

This study investigates how Palestinian high school students view learning English and its cultural aspects within their educational setting. Conducted with 24 ninth-grade EFL learners using qualitative methods, it uncovers that students' social environment and personal differences significantly impact their attitudes and motivation toward language learning. It highlights the value these learners place on mastering English and its culture, while highlighting a clash between their native culture and the one they're studying. Factors such as parental involvement, teacher support, peer influence, motivation, and English's global importance were identified as key influencers on students' beliefs. The study's implications stress the importance for educators and curriculum developers to consider these varied influences to improve English learning experiences for Palestinian students.

a study conducted in 2021 at Chaudhary Charan Singh P.G. College in India. It evaluates the language aptitude of female undergraduate students in B.A. and B.Sc. (Ag.) programs, involving 40 students in each discipline. The study used Fisher's t-test to analyze the language aptitude test results. Findings revealed that B.Sc. (Ag.) students scored an average of 43.21%, while B.A. students scored 27.50%. Notably, the scores did not align with a normal distribution. The article emphasizes the importance of language aptitude in societal integration, academic success, and the global use of English in technology and services.

Additionally, it highlights the lifelong impact of a mother's language proficiency on a child's development and stresses the significance of cultivating a positive attitude toward learning English among female students.

a study by Maria Puspa Sari assessing EFL learners' views on an English program within an engineering college in Palembang. This evaluation aimed to refine the program by understanding learners' perceptions across six areas: teaching materials, methodology, fees, course design, facilities, and service quality. 87.9% of enrolled learners participated via a 15-item questionnaire at the program's end. The results indicated a predominantly positive attitude among participants, signifying satisfaction with the program. This suggests that learners found the program valuable and effective in improving their English skills within an engineering context. A literature review might explore similar studies, emphasizing the importance of learner feedback in program enhancements, the impact of specialized language programs in technical fields, and the relationship between program quality and learning outcomes.

In the article titled 'Government School Secondary Students' Attitudes Towards English Language Learning: A Case Study of Pakistan,' a quantitative methodology was employed to measure the attitudes of 9th and 10th-grade students, encompassing both science and arts groups, in government schools in Bahawalpur, Pakistan. The study utilized a 30-item questionnaire consisting of closed-ended questions. Statistical analysis was conducted using SPSS version 16. The findings indicated a positive inclination towards learning the English language.

The research conducted by Alege, M.A., illuminated the interconnectedness of various factors - student habits, lack of interest, teacher quality, parental involvement, and governmental support - contributing to students' attitudes towards learning English in government schools in Pakistan. Understanding these factors holistically can pave the way for targeted interventions and reforms to enhance students' attitudes and proficiency in the English language.

The researcher Benjamin Panmei, in the article titled 'Understanding University Students' Attitudes Toward English Language Learning in Thailand,' emphasizes that students, regardless of gender and field of study, exhibit a positive attitude toward learning the English language. To sustain this positive outlook, it is essential to employ active learning activities and gamification tools in teaching.

In the research titled 'The Impact of Language Attitude on Swear Word Use: A Sociolinguistic Study of Pashtu Non-native English Speakers,' the focus was on understanding how the attitudes of Pashtu non-native English speakers toward Pashtu and English languages might influence their use of swear words in different contexts. The study involved gathering data from 30 male undergraduate university students through structured interviews. The findings indicated that these speakers generally held positive attitudes toward both English and Pashtu, driven by different motivations—instrumental for English and integrative for Pashtu.

Another study explored the influence of students' text possession, attitudes toward learning English, and their home environment on the acquisition of the English language. The results highlighted that students displayed favorable attitudes toward learning English and had supportive home backgrounds, both contributing to effective English language acquisition.

Conclusion

After reviewing a diverse range of studies examining attitudes towards English language learning across various contexts and populations, several recurring themes and insights emerge.

Firstly, the attitude towards learning English appears to be influenced by a multitude of factors, including the learning environment, instructional methodologies, socio-cultural backgrounds, and personal motivations. Studies showcased positive attitudes prevalent among learners, with nuances based on gender, academic discipline, educational settings (such as single-sex versus coeducational schools), and cultural contexts. Additionally, these attitudes were seen to impact language proficiency, with some studies highlighting a correlation between positive attitudes and higher language achievements.

Furthermore, the studies underscore the significance of employing both qualitative and quantitative methodologies to comprehensively understand attitudes towards learning English. Surveys, questionnaires, interviews, and statistical analyses, including tools like Likert scales and ANOVA tests, were commonly utilized methods for data collection and interpretation. These diverse approaches provided nuanced insights into learners' perspectives, their motivations, and the effectiveness of instructional programs. Moreover, various studies emphasized the importance of external influences, such as teacher support, parental involvement, peer influence, and societal perceptions, in shaping learners' attitudes towards English language acquisition. Strategies focusing on enhancing language learning experiences, integrating effective teaching methodologies, and promoting a positive attitude toward language acquisition were suggested as crucial for improving proficiency and fostering a conducive learning environment.

Overall, the literature reviewed highlights the complex interplay of factors influencing attitudes towards learning English, acknowledging its importance in global communication, academic success, and societal integration. It underscores the need for tailored approaches considering diverse learner backgrounds and preferences, advocating for holistic strategies that encompass not only linguistic aspects but also cultural and motivational elements to optimize language learning experiences.

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