

Students' Attitudes towards Learning English Language in Erbil

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Abstract: This research investigates students' attitudes towards learning English language in private universities in Erbil. Attitude is considered as a necessary component in language learning. Therefore, a positive attitude is considered as one of the significant factors that has an impact on language learning. The main purpose of this study is to reveal students' attitudes towards learning English and find out how to make their attitudes positive. Lecturers who know how to develop positive attitudes in students will be able to conduct interesting and effective classroom activities; get them to be more successful in learning English. The researchers used multi regression analysis to test the research hypothesis. The findings showed that there is a strong association between cognitive attitude and learning English language, while the value B for cognitive attitude is $.765 < 0.01$, the value B for behavioral attitude is $.461 < 0.01$, accordingly the researchers came to conclude that there is a positive relationship between behavioral attitudes and learning English language as well, and the value B for emotional attitude is $-.166 > 0.01$, so the third research hypothesis was rejected. The findings of this study revealed that the highest value was for cognitive attitude, which indicates that there is a strong relationship between cognitive attitude and learning English language. Lecturers should take into consideration the beliefs, feelings and behaviours of the learners of English language. Students' attitudes significantly vary with respect to their gender and the years of language education that they have had.

Keywords: Behavioural Attitude, Cognitive Attitude, Emotional Attitude, Erbil/Kurdistan

1. Introduction

Education is considered to be a powerful method which aids to change the behaviour of the students based on their needs and expectation of the society. Student attitude is considered an essential part of learning; consequently it becomes an important element of second language learning. English language has an important role in many societies as it is the language which separates influential class from the rest of individual who lives in society (Akram & Yasmeen, 2011). Candlin and Mercer (2011) concerning student's attitudes towards the learning English language state that it is the learning context that might explain their success in learning a language. Many lecturers have different strategies used in their class in order to recognize the target students' attitudes (Ahmed, et al., 2012). According to Youssef (2012) attitudes towards a specific language could be either positive or negative. Attitudes towards learning English language have an impact on behaviours such as choosing and reading books, listening to English radio, watching English channels etc. Particularly in academic, when students have a positive attitude towards learning English language, they will be able to attain many things in that particular area. Many students begin learning English from primary school; some others from kindergarten or even from day care; however the issue is that many of them are not able to accomplish the desired level of English

proficiency, the main reason is de-motivation of students in all levels. 'Attitude' is as somebody's thoughts or emotional state regarding to something, particularly as exposed in their behaviour. Section two of this research consists of literature review that will look into various studies, theories, attitude definitions, importance of attitudes and attitude components. Learning a new language is the powerful instrument which aids to adjust the behaviour of the student with regard to their desires and expectation of the society. Student's attitude is an essential portion of learning; consequently attitude is considered a vital factor of language learning. Attitude towards learning English is supposed to affect attitude for instance choosing and reading the right material, communicating with a native English speaker and so on. Particularly in University, if students have a positive attitude towards a particular topic, they will be able to attain numerous things in that particular field. There is a relation between learning language and the environmental mechanisms in which students were grown up. Both positive and negative attitudes will have a huge influence on the achievement of learning the English language. According to Yamashita (2013) there are several factors that have impact on learning the English language process for instance attitude, age, anxiety, aptitudes, gender, and personality and so on. This research concentrates on the idea of attitude as the main affective aspects for achievement in learning a new language. In more detail, it examines students' attitudes towards learning English language, focusing on three aspects of attitude (emotional, behavioural and cognitive).

2. Literature Review

Attitude is considered to be a major factor to be successful in language learning, therefore several research studies have been carried out in the field of students' attitudes towards learning language (Bui & Channarong, 2013).

2.1 Definitions of Attitude

Attitude has several definitions from the perspective of diverse aspects and contexts. Kurihara (2006) defined attitude as person's belief regarding an attribute of executing the behaviour, prejudiced by assessments of attributes. Lawrence and Lawrence (2013) defined attitude as connected to an individual's beliefs and values. All individuals have some attitudes towards everything, it could be negative or positive therefore, students' attitudes towards learning English will not vary with mentioned statement, students could have negative attitudes towards learning English language on the other hand they could have positive attitudes towards the English language. Yamashita (2013) states that attitude is a complex psychological construct. According to Sadighi & Zarafshan (2006) and Petrides (2006) there are many factors that play a role in students' success, and attitude is considered as one of the most influential factors. Lecturers' attitudes play a role in teaching English language such as teachers' commitment and motivation (Vasudevan, 2013). Abidin, et al., (2012) pointed out that attitude consist of three components: cognitive, affective and behavioural. The cognitive component includes the thoughts regarding the object of the attitude. The affective component is related to the individual's emotions and feelings towards an object, and the behavioural component contains the propensity to accept specific learning behaviours.

2.2 Attitude towards Language Learning

According to Eren (2012) several social and psychological features and attitude of learning the language towards second language impact the capability of the learners. Yao (2011) concentrated on the significance of the study regarding the impact of attitude on learning language. According to Youssef (2012) student's capability, strategy and attitude clarify their accomplishment for learning language. Also, he mentioned that the capability of the students to learn a second language does not only effect by the language and mental skills, nonetheless likewise on the students' attitudes and opinions to the aimed language. Also they pointed that the perception of the attitude can improve the whole language learning process, inducing the environment of student's belief and behaviours to the target language, its community and culture, and also it would classify their propensity to obtain the target language. Yao (2011) pointed a theoretical model, concentrating on the significance of accompanying attitudinal study in the field of learning language. According to Samson (2012) language education providers, scholars and students should recognize that a positive attitude and positive motivation of students enable language learning. Therefore, when the student does not have the propensity and concentration in obtaining the target language to connect with others, in such case student will face a negative attitude and not be encouraged and excited in language learning. According to Al-Tamimi and Shuib (2009) the present matters, pedagogical consequences and new instructions in belief regarding the language learning comprising cognitive, cultural, personal factors, contextual, affective, and social among which attitudes have a significant affect. Lawrence and Lawrence (2013) argued that the main objectives in educating students through contented and language combined learning models is to inspire learner's positive attitude towards the aimed language. Based on the above mentioned it should be clarified whether the objectives have been accomplished or not. Many decades ago the studies of attitudes have been examined in different languages. According to Samson (2012) there are many views regarding language attitudes, at the present time the most common view is an integration of 10 older opinions. This theory proposes that attitude towards altered languages is not stable nevertheless always varying and therefore there is no specific determination regarding attitudes towards learning language

2.3 Aspects of Language Attitude

Youssef (2013) stated that the learning process is considered as a positive amendment in the person's personality regarding the cognitive behavioural and emotional attitude, meanwhile when an individual has learned a particular matter, therefore, an individual starts to behave and think in various ways and person's belief has been distinguished. Moreover, beside cognitive method, the learning process also has psychological and social aspects. Soleimani and Hanafi (2013) stated that attitude comprises three components; the first component is about the attitudes related to the cognitive component. This might include perception /belief regarding the situation or an object connected to the attitude. The second component is the evaluative component. This indicates that the situation/object connected to the attitude might produce dislike/like. The third component is related to the attitudes that have a behavioural component for instance; specific attitude tends to motivate students' to accept specific learning behaviours.

2.3.1 Cognitive Attitude

This aspect contains the belief of the language learners in terms of the information that they can gain and their sympathetic in the process of language learning. The cognitive aspect could be categorized into four phases of linking the earlier information and the new information, producing new information, examining new information, and implementing the new information in different circumstances (Gajalakshmi, 2013).

2.3.2 Behavioural Aspect of Attitude

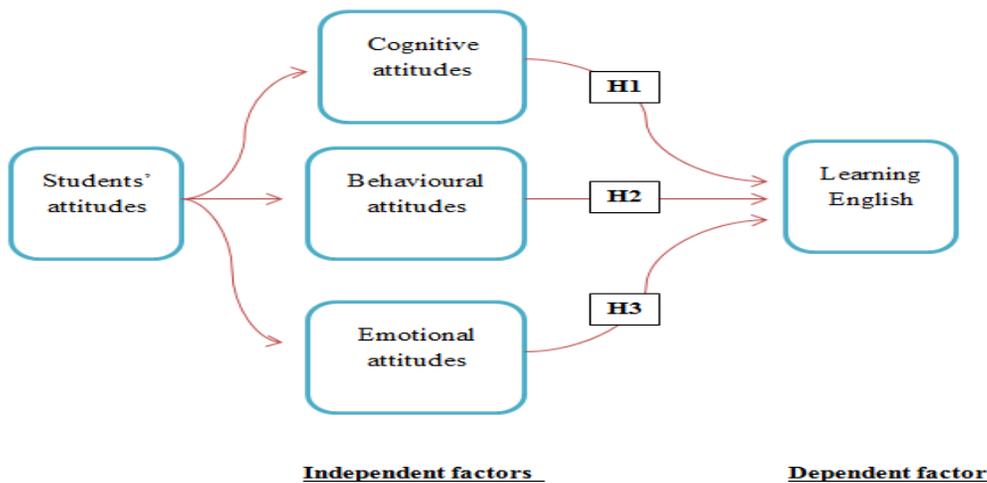
The behavioural aspect determines the way an individual reacts and behaves in specific circumstances. In other words, the effective language learning improves the students to recognize themselves with the native English speakers and adopt or obtain numerous features of behaviours which describe the participants of the aimed language community. An individual with positive attitude will result in the demonstration of positive behaviour towards learning new language. Such individuals are perceived to be extra enthusiastic problem solving, to obtain the knowledge and competencies valuable for day to day life and to motivate emotionally (Gajalakshmi, 2013).

2.3.3 Emotional Aspect of Attitude

Learning process is considered as an emotional process. Usually it is affected by several emotional elements. Attitude could assist the students to show their feeling whether they dislike/like the matters or circumstances. It has been agreed that the internal emotion and feeling of learning new language affect their viewpoints and their attitude towards the aimed language (Gajalakshmi, 2013).

Conceptual framework

Research model



Research hypothesis

H1: There is a positive relation between cognitive attitudes with learning English language.

H2: There is a positive relation between behavioural attitudes with learning English language.

H3: There is a positive relation between emotional attitudes with learning English language.

3. Methodology

3.1 Design of the Study

The purpose of this research is to investigate student's attitudes towards learning English language. The researchers used questionnaire in order to analyse the current study. The questionnaire was divided into two sections, the first section consisted of demographic questions; starting with respondent's age, gender and years of study. The second part of questionnaire consisted of 31 questions regarding student's attitude towards learning English language.

3.2 Sampling Size and Target Population

The aim of sample design is to clearly determine set of objective; a random sampling technique was used, where all students had equal chances of being selected for the sample. The study was carried out at English language teaching department at a private university in Erbil. The English department currently had 214 students, therefore the population of this study was 214 participants and the target population of this study is 138 participants. The researchers distributed 150 questionnaires, only 135 questionnaires were received and from 135 questionnaires only 128 questionnaires were completed properly.

3.4 Instrument for Measuring (scales)

The questionnaire structured in the form of multiple choice questions. The participants were asked to mark each item on five point likert scales, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. This research instruments were validated by earlier researchers to be appropriate for measuring student's attitude towards learning English language (Shah, 2008; Alenezia, 2010; Altamimi&Shuib, 2009; Tsduam, 2003).

4. Data analysis

Table 5: Demographic analysis

Items	Scales	Frequency	Percent
Age	18	10	7.8
	19	21	16.4
	20	29	22.7
	21	33	25.8
	22 and above	35	27.3
Gender	Male	84	65.6

	Female	44	34.4
Education	1st year	14	10.9
	2nd year	37	28.9
	3rd year	29	22.7
	4th year	48	37.5

Table (1) shows demographic analysis for respondents participated in this study. 10 participants were 18 years old, 21 participants were 19 years old, 29 participants were 20 years old, 33 participants were 21 years old and 35 participants were 22 and above years old. 84 participants were male and 44 participants were female. 14 participants were from first year of English language teaching department, 37 participants were from second year of English language teaching department, 29 participants were from third year of English language teaching department and 48 participants were from fourth year of English language teaching department.

Table 6: Reliability tests

Factors	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Cognitive attitude	.802	7
Behavioural attitude	.822	8
Emotional attitude	.898	8
learning English language	.939	8

Table (2) shows the reliability analysis for students' attitudes towards learning English language as independent factors (cognitive attitude, behavioral attitude and emotional attitude), and learning English language as a dependent factor. According to the reliability tests, the researchers found out Cronbach's Alpha for the cognitive attitude =.802 for seven items, which are greater than .6 which means that cognitive attitude's seven items were reliable for this study. The Cronbach's Alpha for the behavioral attitude =.822 for eight items, which are greater than .6 which means that behavioral attitude's eight items were reliable for this study. The Cronbach's Alpha for the emotional attitude =.898 for eight items, which are greater than .6 which means that emotional attitude's eight items were reliable for this study. The Cronbach's Alpha for the learning English language as dependent factor =.939 for eight items, which are greater than .6 which means that learning English language's eight items were reliable for this study.

Table 7: Correlations

Factors	Pearson Correlation	cognitive	behavioural	Emotional
Cognitive attitude	Pearson Correlation	1	.660**	.774**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000
	N	128	128	128
Behavioural attitude	Pearson Correlation	.660**	1	.752**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.000

Emotional attitude	N	128	128	128
	Pearson Correlation	.774**	.752**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	
learning English language	N	128	128	128
	Pearson Correlation	.668**	.617**	.556**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.000
	N	128	128	128

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Table (3) shows the correlation between attitudes' factors as independent factor (cognitive attitude, behavioral attitude and emotional attitude) and learning English language as dependent factor. The value of R for the cognitive attitude = .668** which indicates that cognitive attitude is significantly correlated with learning English language. The value of R for the behavioral attitude = .617** which indicates that behavioral attitude is significantly correlated with learning English language, and the value of R for the emotional attitude = .556** which indicates that emotional attitude is significantly correlated with learning English language.

Table 8: Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.711 ^a	.506	.494	.68055

a. Predictors: (Constant), emotion, behavioural, cognitive

As seen in the table (4), the value of R square = .506 which indicates that 50% of variables have been explained.

Table 9: ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	58.741	3	19.580	42.277	.000 ^b
	Residual	57.430	124	.463		
	Total	116.171	127			

a. Dependent Variable: learning English language

b. Predictors: (Constant), emotion, behavioural, cognitive

Table (5) shows the value of F for three independent factors and the dependent factor is 42.277 > 1 which indicates there is a significant association between three independent factors and dependent factor.

Table 10: Coefficients

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1 (Constant)	-.262	.404		-.649	.518
Cognitive	.765	.149	.523	5.149	.000
behavioural	.461	.123	.364	3.731	.000
Emotional	-.166	.157	-.122	-1.053	.294

a. Dependent Variable: learning English language

Table (6) shows the coefficients analysis for this study. As seen in the above table the value B for cognitive attitude = .765 > 0.01, which supports the first research. The value B for behavioral attitude = .461 > 0.01, the second research hypothesis was supported as well, but the value B for emotional attitude = -.166 < 0.01, so the third research hypothesis was rejected.

Conclusion

Many students have negative attitudes towards English. This indicates that students are not aware of the significance of the English language. 'Attitude' is considered as a necessary factor in language learning. Therefore, it is important to create a positive atmosphere in English classes to develop positive attitudes in students. University lecturers should take account of the beliefs, feelings and behaviours of the learners of English. Students' attitudes significantly vary with respect to their gender and the years of language education that they have had. The researchers used multi regression analysis to test the research hypothesis. The researchers found out that there is a strong association between cognitive attitude and learning English language, the value B for cognitive attitude = .765 < 0.01, the value B for behavioral attitude = .461 < 0.01. Furthermore, the researchers came to conclude that there is a positive relationship between behavioral attitudes and learning English language, in which the value B for emotional attitude = -.166 > 0.01, but the third research hypothesis was rejected.

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