Abstract

The current research paper focuses on the attitude of the first year higher secondary students towards learning English and their achievement in English. It was an exploration in investigating the first year higher secondary students’ attitude towards English Language Learning and their association with their academic achievement. To meet the objectives of the study, data were collected from the first year higher secondary students (N=300). Three research questions were framed to guide this study. Modified version of Fennema and Sherman Attitude scale towards Mathematics (1976) was used to measure the attitude towards learning English among the students. Results revealed that girls have favourable attitude towards learning English and perform better in English when compared to boys. It is interesting to note that students who speak Tamil at home have favourable attitude towards learning English when compared other language speaking students.

1. INTRODUCTION

The researcher has focused particularly on the attitude because it plays a vital role in education which has become a primary and essential part in an individual’s life towards language acquisition. Attitude is the key element for learning a language (Karahan, 2007). Attitude may be affected both externally and internally

Student’s attitude is an integral part of learning and that it should, therefore become an essential component of second language learning pedagogy. Attitudes toward learning are believed to influence behaviours such as selecting and reading books, speaking in a
foreign language etc. Especially in education, if the students have positive attitude towards any subject, they can achieve many things in that specific area. There is an interaction between language learning and the environmental components in which the students were grown up. Both negative and positive attitudes have a strong impact on the success of language learning.

“Attitude is determined by the individual’s beliefs about outcomes or attributes of performing the behaviour, weighted by evaluations of those outcomes or attributes. Thus, a person who holds strong beliefs that positively valued outcomes will result from performing the behaviour will have a positive attitude toward the behavior. Conversely, a person who holds strong beliefs that negatively valued outcomes will result from the behaviour will have a negative attitude.” Attitude concept can be viewed from these three dimensions. Each one of these dimensions has different features to bring out language attitude results. Accordingly, the attitude concept has three components i.e., behavioural, cognitive and affective. These three attitudinal aspects are based on the three theoretical approaches of behaviourism, cognitivism and humanism respectively.

**Behavioural Aspect of Attitude**

The behavioural aspect of attitude deals with the way one behaves and reacts in particular situations. In fact, the successful language learning enhances the learners to identify themselves with the native speakers of that language and acquire or adopt various aspects of behaviours which characterize the members of the target language community.

**Cognitive Aspect of Attitude**

This aspect of attitude involves the beliefs of the language learners about the knowledge that they receive and their understanding in the process of language learning. The cognitive attitude can be classified into four steps of connecting the previous knowledge and the new one, creating new knowledge, checking new knowledge, and applying the new knowledge in many situations.

**Emotional Aspect of Attitude**

Feng .R and Chen .H (2009) stated that, “Learning process is an emotional process. It is affected by different emotional factors. The teacher and his students engage in various emotional activities in it and varied fruits of emotions are yielded.” Attitude can help the learners to express whether they like or dislike the objects or surrounding situations. It is agreed that the inner feelings and emotions of learners influence their perspectives and their attitudes towards the target language (Choy S.C & Troudi .S, 2006).

Since attitude plays a prominent role in learning as well as achievement in English, the investigator felt that the class room activities in the study of English should develop the pupils’ attitude towards learning of English and it should help them to enhance interest towards the subject, English.

The purpose of the study is to assess the attitude towards learning English and achievement in English among higher secondary students.
2. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM
The problem of this study is to examine the students’ attitude towards learning English and their academic achievement in English at the higher secondary level.

3. RESEARCH QUESTIONS
The following research questions have been formulated to guide this study.

➢ Is there any significant relationship between students’ attitude towards learning English and achievement in English?
➢ Is there any significant difference between boys and girls in attitude towards learning English and achievement in English?
➢ Is there any significant difference between the language spoken at home i.e. Tamil or others in attitude towards learning English and achievement in English?

4. METHODOLOGY
The subjects for the study were drawn from selected higher secondary schools within Chennai of Tamil Nadu State. Stratified random sampling was used in the selection of the schools. The sample comprised of students from higher secondary schools. In all, a total of 300 higher secondary Plus One students (141 boys and 159 girls) were randomly selected for the study. The target population for this study were the students in Plus One higher secondary. This category of students were selected on the assumption that they were matured enough to form independent opinion about their attitude towards learning English, their confidence towards the subject and their achievement.

5. INSTRUMENTATION
The investigator required an assessment of attitude towards learning English of higher secondary students. Modified version of Fennema and Sherman Attitude scale towards Mathematics (1976) was used to measure the attitude towards learning English. The scale consists of four subscales: a confidence scale, a usefulness scale, a scale that measures mathematics as a male domain and a teacher perception scale. Each of these scales consists of 12 items. Six of them measure a positive attitude and six measure a negative attitude. This scale has been modified to study the students’ attitude towards learning English. This scale could give a teacher and individual student useful information about that particular student’s attitude towards English. Item numbers 1,2,3,6,10,12,14,15,17,20,25,27,28,31,33,34,35,37,38,41,44,45,46 and 47 are positive attitude items and items numbered 4,5,7,8,9,11,13,16,18,19,21,22,23,24,26,29,30,32,36,39,40,42 and 43 are negative attitude items. Each positive item receives the score 5,4,3,2 and 1 respectively. The scoring for each negative item should be reversed. The maximum possible score for each group of statements is 60 points. The total score constitutes each individual’s score. The achievement scores in English were collected from the mark register.
The Cronbach’s alpha coefficient value of the attitude towards learning English scale is 0.75.

6. OPERATIONAL DEFINITION
   a. Attitude towards learning English
      In the present study, Attitude can be defined as a way of thinking or feeling about learning English. It can be a positive or negative evaluation of people, objects, events, activities or ideas. It can influence a person to show more interest in pursuing his aim or goal.

   b. Academic Achievement in English
      Student achievement measures the amount of academic content a student learns in a determined amount of time. In this study, student’s achievement in English refers to the marks scored by the student in English in the Annual Examination.

7. DATA ANALYSIS
   Data from the study were subjected to appropriate statistical analysis and be able to draw up inferences from it. The t-test and Pearson Product Moment correlation coefficient were used for data analyses.

Research Question 1: Is there any significant relationship between students’ attitude towards learning English and achievement in English?

Table 1: Showing Pearson’s Product Moment correlation co-efficient between Attitude towards learning English and Academic Achievement in English

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Attitude towards learning English</th>
<th>Academic Achievement in English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attitude towards learning English</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>0.711**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** Significant at 0.01 level

From the above table value, it is inferred that there exists significant relationship between attitude towards learning English and achievement in English at 0.01 level.

Research Question 2: Is there any significant difference between boys and girls in attitude towards learning English and achievement in English?

Table 2: Showing significant mean difference between boys and girls in Attitude towards Learning English and Academic Achievement in English

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>t value</th>
<th>P value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Boys (N=141)</td>
<td>Girls (N=159)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>S.D</td>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude towards Learning English</td>
<td>139.05</td>
<td>17.904</td>
<td>145.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic achievement in English</td>
<td>26.00</td>
<td>10.938</td>
<td>28.57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: ** Significant at 0.01 level
It is inferred from the above table that there exists significant difference between boys and girls in attitude towards learning English and achievement in English at 0.01 level. From the mean scores, it is observed that girls (145.74) have favourable attitude towards learning English and high scores in Mathematics (28.57) than boys (139.05, 26.00). This may be due to the fact that girls tend to put more effort in achieving their goals and they put the blame for failure on themselves like lack of effort and hard work whereas boys may project some other reason for their failure. Boys will spend most of the time with their peers while girls tend to spend their time at home.

Research Question 3: Is there any significant difference between the language spoken at home i.e. Tamil or others in attitude towards learning English and achievement in English?

Table 3: Showing significant mean difference between language spoken at home in Attitude towards Learning English and Academic Achievement in English

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>Language spoken at home</th>
<th>t value</th>
<th>P value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tamil (N=162)</td>
<td>Others (N=138)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
<td>S.D</td>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude towards Learning English</td>
<td>143.83</td>
<td>17.756</td>
<td>139.44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Achievement in English</td>
<td>28.17</td>
<td>10.19</td>
<td>25.19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

** Significant at 0.01 level

It is inferred from the above table that there exists significant difference between the students who are speaking Tamil or other language in attitude towards learning English and achievement in English at 0.01 level. From the mean scores, it is observed that the students who are speaking Tamil at home (143.83) have favourable attitude towards learning English and high scores in Mathematics (28.17) than students speaking other language (139.44, 25.19). This may be due to the fact that the parents motivate their wards to learn English due to its importance in obtaining future career and that they put their children in private schools so that they can achieve better.

8. EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS

From the above findings, it is concluded that attitude towards learning English plays a significant role in enhancing achievement in English. Hence, it becomes imperative to foster favourable attitude towards learning English which rests in the hands of the teacher.

Positive attitudes toward learning English should be developed through designing English language activities that would lead the learners to participate and develop their skills. The varied instruction methodologies and activities should meet the needs and positive attitude of learners in order to become successful and fluent speakers of the target language.
A learner's motivations and positive attitude towards learning English are the leading predictors of their success in learning the language. Therefore, based from the aforementioned results of this study, English Teachers should take into consideration these factors in designing English language curriculum and syllabi.

Teachers must use activities and employ a teaching ideology that encourages the growth of intrinsic motivation while boosting the integrative motivation of learners. There are various language activities that can be employed to foster intrinsic motivation, to promote the desire to communicate, and to boost learners’ integrative orientation while enhancing learners’ language abilities.

As regards reading and writing, the only thing that one need to tackle is to adapt with our growing age and concentration. With these two qualities, it is possible to develop reading, oral communication skills and writing skills.

Apart from reading and writing presentations, reports and speeches are a part of school curriculum. This has been introduced in schools and colleges for the overall development of students. This makes expressive skills and managing skills also important for a student. It is also important to develop communication skills in relationships.

What deserves more attention is that most of the students do not feel confident to make presentations and speeches. But realizing the importance of these skills in modern day life, most good schools have made it a regular part of their curriculum. Here comes the role of expressive skills and managing skills.

Expressive skills are those which are used to express our feelings, thoughts and expressions and thus get across our point successfully to the listener. To develop expressive skills, students need to learn is how to communicate effectively and get the full attention of the listeners.

9. CONCLUSION

Motivation is one of the most essential aspects determining success in learning the English language and which can also help in having positive attitude towards English. Teachers should inculcate intrinsic motivation among the students to enhance interest in the subject. Grammar should be taught using real examples so as to make them confident in speaking the language. Communication could be developed by giving group activities and here comes the importance of peer relationship and team work. Also, communicative ability would also be improved among students. Thus, to fulfil the dream of Dr.A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, to make our country a developed one, each and every citizen should be well versed in learning English so as to compete with other developed countries.

10. REFERENCES


**TO CITE THIS PAPER**

This is certified that the paper entitled
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