



A Study of Attitude Measurement Approaches and Correlation between Learner Attitudes for Learning English Language

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ABSTRACT: Attitudes and attitude change have been discussed at least since the beginning of this century. The study of attitudes has been an important area of interest to psychologists, who often were also interested in related concepts such as propaganda. Attitude is one of the most significant factors in understanding a person. It involves intellectual, emotional and behavioural activities. It can be understood as a mental disposition for viewing people and things around us. Language attitude is related to a particular state of mind that shows one's liking and disliking towards a specific phenomenon. Learning is closely related to the positive attitude of the learners and in case of language learning the attitude of the learners cannot be ignored. Motivating the learners to learn a specific language also affects their learning and developing their attitudes towards language learning. In this paper we will study the components of attitude, how to modify attitudes, attitude measurement techniques and the correlation between learner attitudes towards English and achievement in English.

Keyword: Attitude, Behavioral, Cognitive, Affective, Observations, Interviews.

I. INTRODUCTION

The impact of attitude on learning is only one cause for interest in attitudes. There are other opinions that explain why attitudes of learners are important. Most of educators would be of the same mind that there are times when it is realistic and significant for learners to accept the truth of certain ideas. Student attitudes toward a situation can tell the teacher a great deal about the impact of that situation on the learning process. Obviously, attitudes need to be measured in order to know if they have been influenced.

II. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study were:

1. To study area and components of attitude.
2. Study how to modify attitudes.
2. Study the attitude measurement techniques.
3. To Study the correlation between learner attitudes towards English and achievement in English.

III. NEED AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

Learning is closely related to the positive attitude of the learners and in case of language learning the attitude of the learners cannot be ignored. The status of English language has been one of the burning questions in India and few research studies have been conducted on

attitudes towards the learning of English in India. The practical significance of the study might involve the students to study English without being fearful and develop a more positive attitude in language learning. The methodological importance might include the reliability and validity of the instruments used to measure learning environment and attitude towards the learning of English.

IV. AREA AND COMPONENTS OF ATTITUDE

The construct of attitude includes four components: affective responses, cognitions, behaviors, and behavioral intentions provide an explanation as to what each of these components involves as shown in Fig.1.

1. Affective. The affective component of attitude is said to consist of a person's evaluation of, liking of or emotional response to some situation, object or person. Affective responses reflect one's attitude with sensations of pleasure or sadness. For example, for the attitude construct of computer anxiety, a topic of current interest, the affective component would be a person's liking of the computer and his feeling of excitement when he used one.

2. Cognitive. The cognitive component of attitude as the name suggests, involves beliefs or perceptions about the objects or situations related to the attitude. In other words, the cognitive component refers to how much a person knows about a topic, such as computers.

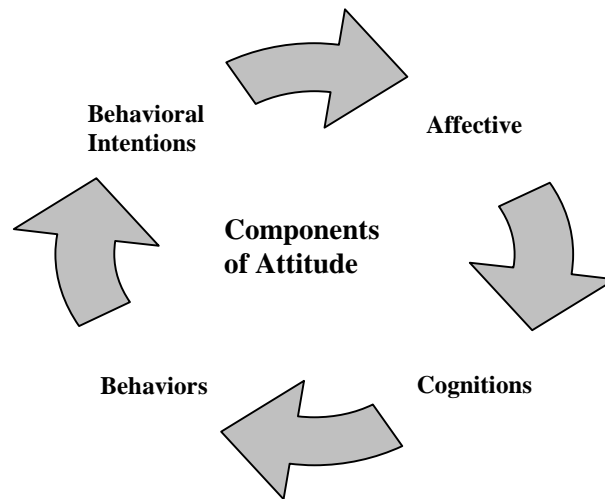


Fig. 1. Area and Components of Attitude.

3. Behavioral. The behavioral component of an attitude involves the person's overt behavior directed toward a situation, object, or person. For example the behavioral component of computer anxiety would be related to how often a person had used a computer and what kind of experience he had. Persons, who routinely use computers, especially if they choose to use them freely, would be more likely to have positive attitudes toward computers and be less anxious than would others who have fewer experiences with computers.

4. Behavioral intention. The behavioral intention component involves the person's plans to perform in a certain way, even if sometimes these plans are never acted upon. An example, once again, is the construct of computer anxiety. Computer anxiety is defined by Maurer and Simonson (1994) as the fear or apprehension felt by an individual when considering the implications of utilizing computer technology or when actually using computer technology.

V. MODIFYING ATTITUDES

Attitudes are not inherent in an individual but are developed due to an individual's own experiences right from childhood. Just as attitudes are developed through one's own experience they can also be modified by experience. Doughty and Long (2003) explain that the acquisition of a second language depends on a modification of attitudes, knowledge, and behaviour towards the members of the target language group. Arnold (1999) conducted a questionnaire to measure the students' attitudes towards the foreign language after using humanistic activities over a two month period. The questionnaire reveals the following ways of change and improvement:

- (i). The students felt that learning a language was not as hard as before.
- (ii). They also felt that the foreign language class was more enjoyable and fun than before.
- (iii). Besides they liked speaking in the foreign language more.

These findings prove that a teacher can change the student's attitudes for the better if he chooses suitable activities and ways of instruction. Morgan provides the following advice for a teacher who attempts to change the students' attitudes:

- (i). The classroom environment should be constantly varied and renewed.
- (ii). Students need to struggle with complex and controversial material and reach their own conclusions, rather than be just the passive receivers of information.
- (iii). Students should become aware of their own attitudes toward language and culture, and this, in turn, will help them to accept others.

VI. ATTITUDE MEASUREMENT TECHNIQUES

There are many used and accepted approaches for collecting attitude information. These approaches are as shown in Fig. 2.

(i). Self-reports. The self-reports include all procedures by which a person is asked to report on his own attitudes. This information can be provided orally through the use of interviews, surveys, polls in written form through questionnaires, rating scales, logs, journals or diaries.

(ii). Reports of others. Where others report about the attitudes of a person or group. For example, Parents of children can be asked how their children feel about Y, where Y is the attitude construct under investigation.

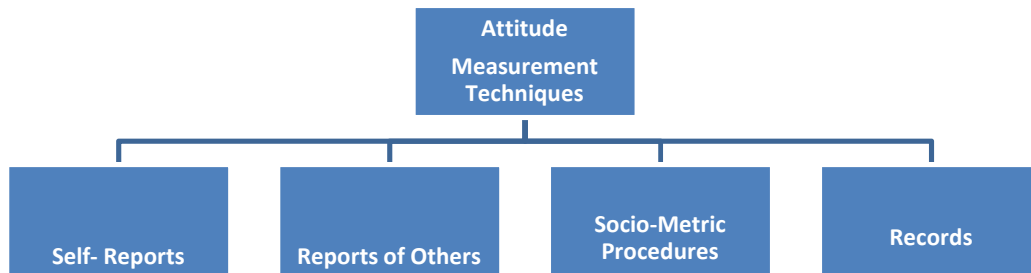


Fig. 2. Attitude measurement Techniques

(iii). Socio-metric procedures. Where members of a group report about their attitudes toward one another. Socio-metrics are used when the researcher desires a picture of the patterns within a group. Members of groups can be asked questions like "Who in your group fits the description of YT" where Y is the attitude position being studied.

(iv). Records. Which are systematic accounts of regular occurrences such as attendance reports, sign-in sheets, library checkout records and inventories. Records are

very helpful when they contain information relevant to the attitude area in question. For example when a researcher is trying to determine if a school wide program to develop a higher level of school pride is working, the school's maintenance records might give an index of the program's effectiveness.

Within each of these categories there are strategies for measuring attitude-related behaviors as shown in Fig. 3. Most commonly, attitude measurement is accomplished by one of the following techniques:

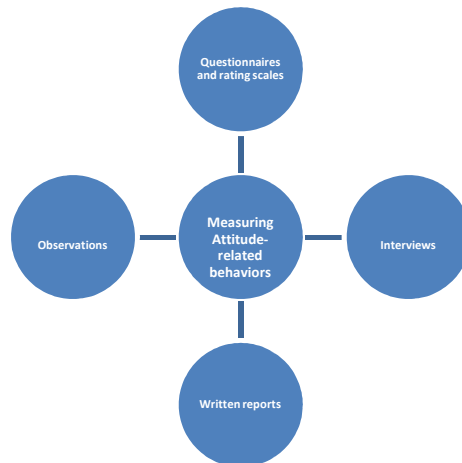


Fig. 3.

(i). Questionnaires and rating scales. Questionnaires and rating scales are instruments that present information to a respondent in writing and then require a written response, such as a check, a circle, a word, a sentence, or several sentences.

(ii). Interviews. Interviews are face-to-face meetings between two or more people in which the respondent answers questions. For example, word-of-mouth procedures, such as interviews, surveys, and polls, are useful because they can be read to people who cannot read or who may not understand written questions.

(iii). Written reports. It includes such as logs, journals and diaries. Logs, journals, and diaries are descriptions of activities, experiences, and feelings written during the course of the program. The main advantage of this approach is that reports provide a wealth of information about a person's experiences and feelings.

(iv). Observations. These procedures require that a person dedicate his or her attention to the behaviors of an individual or group in a natural setting for a certain period of time. The main advantage of this approach is its increased credibility when disinterested unbiased observers are used.

VII. CORRELATION BETWEEN LEARNER ATTITUDES

A student who does not like the native speakers of English or views his own culture superior to the English speaking culture, can walk into a foreign language classroom and quickly generalize his dislikes. He will dislike school, teacher, book, homework, etc. Dornyei (2003) asserts that attitude is as important as language aptitude for predicting the language achievement; he also confirms that positive attitudes towards the learning

situation have consistently been associated with language achievement. Gardner notes that positive attitudes towards the target language and its people and culture lead to better achievement in language learning. The viewpoints presented above help us argue that there is a strong correlation between student's attitudes towards learning a language and their achievement in that language. This might work in two interesting and opposing ways as shown in the Fig. 4.

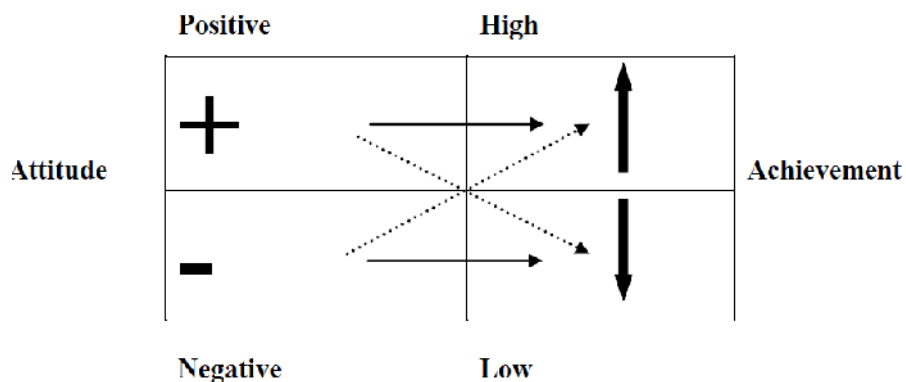


Fig. 4. Correlation between learner attitudes towards English and achievement in English.

The Fig. 4 shows that if learner's attitudes are positive their achievement in the language being studied will be high. If they hold negative attitudes their achievement in the language will be low. However the Fig. 4 also shows that the opposite is also possible learners with negative attitudes might have high achievement and vice versa.

VIII. CONCLUSION

The learning of a new language is linked to the way in which the learner views the target language community and culture. As a result of quantitatively and qualitatively assessing the opinions of students toward the learning activities in which they are participating. It may be possible to improve the quality of procedures. One of the most important techniques of evaluation is to find out attitudes toward some event, object or person. A specific strategy for attitude measurement should be chosen which is appropriate for the type of attitude construct of interest, the type of learner and the situation being examined. There are different ways and techniques can guarantee change and improvement in student's attitudes towards learning English. The teacher's role here is to find out the effective methods which will help foster positive attitudes in the students.

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