

ANALYZING ATTITUDINAL FACTORS AND THEIR RELATION TO LANGUAGE LEARNING (AQUANTITATIVE RESEARCH CONDUCTED IN ONE OF THE CLASSES AT STBA X - TANGERANG)

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ABSTRAK

This research is a simple research conducted only to one class of STBA X– Tangerang with 10 students as the subjects of research taken as purposive sampling. This research aims at knowing the relation between the students’ attitude and their accomplishment in English, as well as the other supporting factors of their attitude and lastly attitudinal effect on the students’ learning goal is also explored. Research found that basically the students’ positive attitude (showing in the written scale) has a quite positive impact on their accomplishment despite the fact the data taken are only the last semester test, however from the students’ response, it is clear that they have a quite positive attitude which can probably affect their learning result. It is high time for teachers, parents and other sources who are proven influential to the students’ progress, to always support their students so that the students can always have positive attitude in their learning foreign language, due to their continuous discussion with their teacher or parents rather than absorbing irrelevant information which can possibly affect the children attitude thus jeopardizing their learning process.

Keyword: Analyzing, attitudinal factor, relation, language learning

A. INTRODUCTION

There has been a widely adopted adage that what you like is what you can do. This adage reminds us toward the importance of our attitude toward our work, activity or even anything around us. Thus having positive attitude toward something might be a great asset for anyone who learns including the one who learns English. However there are factors that seem to affect attitude itself in making a person move onward.

Scholars believe that attitude is not a single entity but an interconnected one which is mutually affected by other factors. Thus attitude might be affected by other factors which are deeply rooted in one’s life, such as culture, values, perception, etc.

Pursuant to the above precept the writer tries to propose some research questions as the followings.

1. To what extent can attitude affect the students’ achievement?
2. What factors are found to be significant in affecting students’ attitude?
3. To what extent can the students’ attitude affect their learning goal?

B. THEORETICAL REVIEW

a. Culture, definition and its elements.

Basically, culture is variously defined by scholars, thus in this research, the writer picks up some of the relevant theories proposed only by some scholars, such as Brown (1994, p. 163) who defines culture as a way of life, the context in which we exist, think, feel and relate to others. While Schaefer (2008, p. 55), defines culture as “the totality, socially transmitted customs, knowledge, material objects, and behavior or the people’s way of lives”. Judd (2002, p. 10) suggesting that culture is “the system of shared object, activities, and beliefs of a given group of people”.

Weeks (1990, in Nunan and Choi, 2010, p. 3) further reinforces the above premises that the recognition of culture will generate into a smaller aspect called as “identity” referring to one’s recognition toward a certain culture.

VandenZanden (1990) categorizes culture into two broad categories such as: non-material cultures which represent “abstract creation like values, beliefs, symbols, norm, customs, and institutional arrangements” and material cultures representing “physical artifacts or objects like stone axes, computer, loincloths, tuxedos, automobiles, paintings, hammock, etc.” (p. 31).

b. The relation between culture and attitude

Rogers (2011) quoting Gordon Allport (1935, 810) believes that previously attitude was defined in somewhat behavioristic-oriented as “a mental and neural state of readiness, organized through experience, exerting a distinctive or dynamic influence upon the individual’s response to all objects and situation with which it is related (p. 230).

However, Rodgers (2011, p. 230) further assures that attitude is more commonly defined as “psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favor or disfavor” referring to the definition coined by Eagly&Chaiken(1998, p. 269).

Baron et al. (2008) corroborating the above concept by defining attitude as “an evaluation of various aspects of the social world”, while further postulating that people can have favorable or unfavorable reaction to issues, ideas, objects, a specific behavior (such as cheating on an exam), or entire social groups. (p. 148).

Basically most social psychologists believe that attitude can influence people’s thought, action or behavior (Baron et al. 2008; Aronson et al. 2010; Myers, 2009; Aronson et al. 2010), although some scholars also believe that attitude might not be as powerful factor as we predict before, even in some cases our behavior that we continuously practice might influence or change our attitude (see e.g. Myers, 2009; Robbins& Judge, 2007, etc.).

However, Robbins and Judge believe (2007) that most research nowadays confirms that “people seek consistency among their attitudes and between their attitudes and their behaviors which means that they tend to reconcile their divergent attitude, align their attitudes and behavior so they appear rational and consistent” (p. 69).

Baron et al. (2008, pp. 148-149), later on divides attitude into two large categories such as explicit attitude, and implicit attitude, while Myers (2009) adding that basically attitude which is closely connected to our upbringing (implicit attitude) may change more slowly compared with explicit attitude (p. 32).

Further, Rogers (2011) suggests that attitude tends to be different based on cultural differences just in the case of a study comparing commercial advertisement in the USA and Korea (Han and Shavitt, 1993) indicating the differences of attitude depending on cultural background (p.233). Robbins and Judge, (2007) alike, believe that attitude or behavior are possibly influenced by values which are defined as basic conviction that a specific mode of conduct or end-state of existence is personally or socially preferable to an opposite or converse mode of conduct or end-state of existence (pp. 108-109). While being absent in confirming the existence of culture as the underlying factor of value, Robbins and Judge's precept indirectly put one of the cultural elements as the basis of attitude change.

- c. Attitudinal factors in language learning, between theoretical and empirical perspectives.

Theoretically, the existence of attitude as one of the influential factors affecting human's decision to do or not to do has been long recognized by scholars. Take for example, Gardner and Lambert (1972) who believe that the ability of the students to master a second language is not only influenced by the mental competence or, language skills, but also on the students' attitudes and perceptions towards the target language.

Similarly, Ellis (1994) believes that learners' affective factors are obviously of importance in accounting for individual differences in learning outcomes. She further points out while learners' beliefs about language learning are likely to be fairly stable, their affective states tend to be volatile, affecting not only overall progress but responses to particular learning activities on a day -by day and even moment -by moment basis.(p. 483).

Further, Kumaravadevilu, (2006, p. 38) quoting from RoutledgeEncyclopedia (2000, p. 57)), categorizes attitude as one of the affective factors affecting learners not only to the processing of information and identification with people or groups, but also to the motives and the relationship between language and culture, as well as their place within the existing linguistic and cultural diversity. Padwick (2010) confirms that the nature of language learning has psychological and social aspects and depends primarily on the learners' motivation and attitude to learn the target language.

Last but not least, Hosseini and Pourmandnia (2013) confirm that basically there are two significant factors affecting learning language such as the learner's attitude and perception toward the target language. Empirically, Sinno's (2008) research found that despite being important in supporting language learning, the students learning objective could possibly

outweigh the students' attitude toward their language. This research was conducted to some Lebanese students who learned English, and despite the fact there are some negative attitudes toward American government, the Lebanese students' stronger objectives could possibly prevent their negative attitude in retarding their learning process.

Fakeye (2010) investigated the correlation between attitude and achievement in English among 400 senior secondary students who were selected randomly from five secondary schools. The findings revealed that there was a significant relationship between attitude and achievement. Additionally, it was also found that students' attitude is not gender-related. Abidin, M, J, Z., Pour-Mohammadi, M., & Alzwari, H. (2012) explored the students' attitude in their language learning in one of Libyan secondary schools. They found that the respondents' negative attitude towards English found during the research might lead to their assumption that the students are not well aware of the importance of English and learn it as a compulsory subject. So, they further point out that a positive attitude should be the umbrella of language learning and EFL teachers should respect and think about students' feelings, beliefs and behaviors before the cognitive abilities. English curriculum and classroom activities should also involve affective aims according to the students' needs and their individual differences to build up positive attitudes towards English.

Gajalakshmi. (2013), slightly differs nonetheless, while corroborating the above claim on the importance of attitude in supporting language learning, she also found that there were some influential factors affecting attitude e.g. gender, school management, or school status (governmental or privately funded institution), etc. From the above excerpts we can conclude that there have been ample facts viewing attitude from both theoretical and empirical aspects, and all prove the importance of attitude in supporting the language learning process, therefore it is deemed important to analyze how attitude can affect language learning in Indonesian context as well as finding more causes which can possibly provide a much bigger lens on how attitude can be affected by other factors such as. School management, gender, objective of learning, etc., thus this research is partially important to replicate the above research as well as to find a more comprehensive answer toward the sources which can possibly optimize the attitude of the students' learning.

C. RESEARCH METHOD

In this research the writer uses quantitative approach as the most common ground of research employing quantification comprising the data to be measured, observed, along with the other characterizing quantifications, such as; requiring a description of trends or an explanation of the relationship among variables, be specific and narrow, and collecting data using instruments with preset questions and responses, and so forth (Cresswell, 2006, pp. 53-55).

In this step the writer will adopt Frankle and Wallen's (2006, p. 100) convenience sampling due to its availability and accessibility, while finding other

samples might be difficult due to time constraints and limited support from the field. The sampling is taken from one class of STBA X located in Tangerang consisting 10 students to be analyzed using attitude tests.

Creswell (2008) proposes in order that the data could be analyzed, he suggests scoring data which means that the researcher assigns numeric score (or value) to each response category, and later on the data can be analyzed using descriptive statistic to indicate general tendencies in the data (pp. 183-190). Besides, the Likert-like test questionnaire is also applied due to its simplicity, and clarity in eliciting the data from relatively large sample (Yu, 2010).

However, another thing to note is, since not all students are available to be taken as the respondents only few data can be taken.

Procedure of research

1. Giving the students information on the attitude scale that they would take.
2. The students are requested to put the number based on the sequence of the test they follow /based on their seat number (1 – 10) in order to guarantee their privacy in voicing their opinion.
3. The students are seated on separated seat thus occupying the seat on one to one student while one chair (in between) skipped for their comfort.
4. Based on the students' availability there are finally 10 students left who are willing to follow the scale attitude which will last for approximately 20 minutes.
5. The writer will, later on, contrast the result of their first attitude scale (see appendix 1) with their semester test result (the data will be taken from the lecturer of the students joined in the test).
6. The writer will also test the second scale test which is intended to find out information regarding several factors which can possibly support the students' attitude. The reason to find the supporting factors of attitude are also based on the previous research (see. e.g., Gajalakshmi, 2013).
7. Lastly, the writer will also test the students' objective in their learning whether their learning objective is stronger than their attitude. This is important since the previously conducted research has also shown the superiority of learning purpose, and could possibly outweigh the students' attitude (Sinno, 2008).

D. FINDING AND ANALYSIS

a. Findings

Based on the analysis on the attitude test given to the students most students are found to have a relatively positive attitude on what they are doing at the moment. The data shown that no one put "1" which is indicated as "don't agree" to the statement thus showing his negative attitude.

Data on the students score in the last semester is also taken for consideration, and it turns out that all students could pass the test and have relatively good scores, despite the fact that the scores vary from the highest to the relatively lower, but generally they could be considered "pass" this semester.

The students are also found to make use information from the teacher to be one of the sources to maintain their positive attitude in their learning. This is shown that most students tend to strongly agree that their teacher is the main source to keep their attitude thus maintaining their motivation or spirit to learn along with their parents.

This is also similar to what Brown (2001) postulates that in order to motivate the students the teacher needs to provide sufficient information on the importance of their learning to enable them to constantly progress in their study. Indeed, Brown (2001) has also stated that students' motivation can also be affected externally for instance, by their teachers or parents.

The objective of the students are also found not affected by irrelevant information which means that no matter how bad the information outside their world is, this will not affect their goal in their learning. In short, they believe that despite some bad information regarding the English speaking countries what they are doing is still a positive thing for them, thus helping them improve their quality of life, particularly their professional life in the future. .

b. Analysis

Although other measurements might be of better use, the relationship between the students' attitude and their accomplishment in their semester test might be considered. However there are also some exceptions in that there are two students who are found to have relatively low scores. In this research there are two students whose attitudes are shown "positive" but have relatively low scores (St 6 & 9, they both get 60, and 70, see appendix 3), while others have relatively higher scores. However since attitude's impact to the academic accomplishment is not always free from the other factor .e.g. intelligence, thus their low scores might be due to the students' intelligence or the other factors, including the students' difficulty in absorbing the material (the test score contrasted in this research is academic reading which is certainly not an easy skill for some students, certainly the good attitude will not solely become the working panacea that can change the students score drastically). However, generally the students' score which is relatively relevant to their attitude is a proof of possible relation of the students' attitude and their accomplishment.

There are some sources which are proven to support the students' attitude without which the students will also have unstable attitude. In fact, the students' response on who or what sources they think important clearly show that so far the teacher and parents are the most important figures in supporting the students' attitude in their learning.

The students are also found to be well –aware of their purpose, it was proven from their answers, that there is no connection of what the English speaking countries have done with them, even though some answers tend to show that they actually disagree with the extreme cases of human right violations committed by some countries (shown with "score 1" in their answers see appendix 7), however, they are found to be logically firm that

what they are studying is merely instrumental motive and not an integrated one (see appendix 7).

E. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

a. Conclusion

Based on this finding it is proven that attitude does affect the students accomplishment just like what other researchers found, however, since there are possible extraneous variables, there should be a more reliable and valid way of research to be conducted further in order to separate those variables one of them might be using correlation, regression, or longitudinal requiring more participatory research in order to balance between written data and field information obtained thus making the research more trustworthy.

It is also revealed that in Indonesian context, teacher and parental influences are very significant in supporting or maintaining the students' positive attitude in their learning language (while in the previous research it is not discussed see the previously relevant research, e.g. Sinno, 2008; Fakeye, 2010; Abidin, et al. 2012; Gajalakshmi, 2013), despite the fact that there is also possible irrelevant information, or school mates' information which can also affect the up and down of the students' attitude, however based on the data, it was found that teacher and parents are the most important factors/sources to support and maintain positive attitude in the students' language learning.

Based on this research, the objective was proven much stronger than the attitude (the research previously conducted by Sinno, 2008 has also proven this claim), this is because most students seem to understand that what they are doing is just a matter of pursuing professional career not an integrated one, so they believe that what they are doing now is their own responsibility thus requiring their own commitment to do that.

b. Suggestion

Since this research is conducted in a very short period (2 weeks) the possibility of obtaining the data might not be very valid and reliable, some constraints hamper, e.g., the students' availability to attend for the attitude scale test, the teacher's hectic schedules, etc. However, empirically the result of the students' achievement in UAS might be a proof of the students' attitude toward their learning program in one semester if they answer those attitude scale tests honestly. There should be a further research on how to conduct a more thorough analysis/research toward the importance of attitude since this factor might affect the students' willingness to learn.

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