

Student's Attitude & Motivation Towards English Language Learning: English Major Students at Dire Dawa University in Focus

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to explore English major Students attitude and motivation towards English language learning. The study is descriptive and aimed to describe the existing students' attitude and motivation towards English language learning. The participants of study were all 1st, 2nd & 3rd year English major students at Dire Dawa University. In order to get the intended data, 35 close ended attitude questions were developed and filled by 51 English major students. The reliability of developed questions to all variables were evaluated by using Cronbach's Alpha and the obtained result marks a good reliability consistence which is greater than 0.7 The administered questionnaire was a five point Likert –scale attitude questions which was targeted to obtain English major students attitude and motivation toward English language learning. The obtained data was analyzed quantitatively using SPSS that contains descriptive statistics such as mean scores and standard deviations. Based on respondents' response, the result of the study revealed that students have positive attitude towards English language in general and English language learning in particular. Moreover, the obtained result also depicted that respondents have positive outlook on English language teachers and the activities students are given to interact with in classroom. In addition, the subjects' responses revealed that they are instrumentally motivated to learn English language. Finally, the researcher would like to recommend that teaching is not getting in front of the class; teachers' needs to be doing more to get students in taking an active role in their learning. Moreover, a teacher shouldn't spend much time to talk rather let students to interact with the activities. In order to grasp the intended knowledge and skills, a student has to develop interest towards the target language. In doing so, a teacher has to play an important role in bringing a desirable attitude and motivation in teaching and learning process.

Keywords: Attitude, Motivation, English Major Students

Introduction

Attitude and motivation toward learning a language are essential in order to bring the desirable language outcome. According to Gardner (1985), motivation is a 'combination of effort & desire to realize the goal of learning the language as well as it has positive attitude towards learning the language'. On the other hand, Allport (1954) claims that attitude is a mental and neutral states of readiness, organized through experience exerting a direct or indirect or dynamic influence upon the individual response to all objects and situations with which it related. Furthermore, Nation P. (2014) pointed out that learning a language needs high motivation toward a student for the reason that language learning includes a lot of regular works in order to grasp the desirable language outcome. On the other hand, Krashen (1981) forwarded that students attitude towards the class and may reveal negative /positive outcome of language learning.

Saville (2006) has also states that individual motivation is a factor to be successful for L2 learners. He claims that the attempt that learners pay out at different stages in their L2 improvement depends on how much students are motivated to learn the language. He also argues that the more motivated students are, the easier they will learn a new language. Learner's attitudes are important to learn L2. Negative attitude can negatively influence L2 learners according to Ellis (1994) argument. This marks that a genuine interest, believe, attitudes in L2 learning is important. Students with a desirable interests, believes and attitude in target language are likely to be more motivated to manage their own learning and develop the essential skills to become effective learners. Hence, English language learning is significant when students' motivation and attitude is considered. Oroujlou & Vahedi (2011) had done a study on this area and finally the finding of the study revealed that motivation and attitude have greater roles in increasing proficiency and efficiency of the students in language learning.

From year to year, students who major English at Dire Dawa University are diminishing in number and the researcher was/is also an instructor of these students and observed that most students are/were reluctant and inefficient in their academic performance. These seem student's motivation and attitude towards the target language is in question and it has to be investigated in order to address the expected language outcomes. From scholars view stated above, we can understand that motivation and attitude are vital or a driving force in learning the language as well as it is important for language instructors to acknowledge students' preferences and attitudes towards the target language in order to better understand and provide for students' needs in the

language learning. Therefore, study aims to identify English major students motivation and attitude in learning the language and finally the study recommends remedial actions to be taken by concerned bodies.

Review of Related Literature

Definition of Motivation

Researcher as well as scholar defines motivation in different context, so that there is no single definition to the term. In second language learning (L2) context the term motivation is defined as “individual strives to learn because of students desire to do so and the satisfaction experienced in the activity”. (Gardner, 1985, cited on Oroujlou & Vahedi, 2011). On the other hand, Bachtiar K R., (2011) says motivation is a factor determining the extent of people’s desire to do an activity. Brown (1987) defines it as “an inner drive, impulse, emotion or desire that moves one toward a particular action” (cited on Bachtiar K R. 2011) According to the above scholars definitions, it is clear that motivation is a desire or passion learners exert or attempt to successfully learn the language and able them to obtain the required skills of the target language.

Motivation and Language Learning

Motivation plays an important role in the process of learning a language. It is also a driving force and determinate factor for students’ achievement in learning second language and students’ achievement depends on the level students motivated to learn the language. (Gardner, 1985) On the other hand, teachers do not provide the desirable language skills unless they identify and understand the role of motivation in language learning process. (Oroujlou & Vahedi, 2011). The authors (Oroujlou & Vahedi) further states that Students should understand the reason why they need to make an effort, how long they must carry on an activity, how hard they should pursue it, and how motivated they feel toward their pursuits. Similarly, the teacher has to identify students’ need, purpose in learning the language as well it is significant for teacher to provide clear instruction and has to work to bring passion as to meet the intended goal since students have different interests and expectation on the language. (Ibid)

Types of Motivation

Instrumental & Integrative Motivation

With regards to language learning, instrumental motivation is a desire where Learners learn the target language to get a salary/ bonus or to be admitted into colleges. (Rehma et al., 2014, cited on Anjomshoa & Sadghi 2015) In other word, Students instrumentally motivated to get social and economic reward through L2 Learning. (Gardner and Lambert (1992) Therefore, an instrumental motivation seeks a reward from outside sources according to Anjomshoa & Sadghi, (2015). Conversely, a student is integratively motivated when she/he learns language to be part of native society, to behave like the native speakers. (Oroujlou & Vahedi, 2011) In addition, Falk, (1978) has also revealed that integrative motivation mean that when a person likes to speak English, as of English people and wishes to integrate and be recognized as one of the members of the targeted language.

Definition of Attitude

Attitude, by Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary (2006), is defined as the way that you feel about something or the way you behave toward something that shows how you think and feel.

Attitude & Language Learning

The process of language learning is linked to the attitudes towards the target language; it is also crucial for success or failure of students in language learning as Starks and Partridge, (1996) pointed out. Hernick and Kennedy, (1968) cited on Gardner 1985 indicated that forcing students to learn the language hastily creates feeling of frailer, and it is obvious that such dissatisfaction could generalize to attitudes towards learning a language among some students. Having positive attitude is knowing the importance of English language and recognizing as an essential course to be learned. (Cabansag, 2013). Cabsang further claimed that attitude is an important element in language learning and students grasp knowledge if students have positive attitude towards the target language; therefore, English teachers should look at students feeling, beliefs, and behavior before attempting to address the intended knowledge of the target language according to Cabasang, (2013).

Attitude, Teacher, Methodology, Classroom Activities

Learning is facilitated when a close positive relationship exists between a teacher and a student. The attitude of a student toward a teacher can also hinder the learning process. If a student dislike his/her teacher or teaching methodology or teacher language competence, is or motiveless by classroom activities, he/she may really be unable to perform at its optimum level. In language learning, the word attitude is also associated with teachers’ language competence, methodology as well as the classroom activities students are provided to interact with. Attitudes are situational and can therefore be generalized. Language, teacher, class, book and homework are

within the frame of reference of learning and within the situation of school. A student who doesn't like learning and school, teachers and homework can walk into foreign language classroom and quickly generalize his dislikes. Therefore, good attitudes and feelings are needed to raise the efficiency of the students in language learning classes.

Teacher proficiency in English is linked to the teachers' sense of satisfaction & his/ her willingness to teach English (Krishnan and Pandit 2003, cited on NCERT, 2006). This may be able to be related to teacher Proficiency and professional awareness in language teaching. A curriculum is only as effective as its implementation and the success of any classroom activity or innovation stems from the teacher's resources in the language although teacher is not considered a sole source of language input. (NCERT, 2006) It is also believed that teachers should have basic proficiency in English as well as the skills to teach English in ways appropriate to their situation and levels. (Ibid)

Currently, student-centered approach in language teaching is popular in Ethiopia and in other countries. Accordingly, language teachers have also acknowledged the role of a student-centered approach in teaching the target language in which teachers is capable of supporting students to learn in context and to use it in real situations in language classroom. In a student-centered approach cooperative learning such as pair work or group work shall be used in teaching language in classroom; these can help learners express their opinions, share their ideas and discuss and debate with each other. (Richard 2001). In using collaborative learning like pair work and group work language teachers should help students construct classroom language in order realize the teachers' instructions, choose appropriate group techniques, plan group work, monitor tasks, and help students to start the activity (Brown 2007). Furthermore, modern methodology is much more student centered and the teacher's main role is to help students on learning, encouraging them to participate, talk, interact (Jim 2005)

Teaching materials play an important role in language teaching. The teaching materials such as text-based, task-based and realia are common in teaching language. These can be textbooks, games, role plays, simulations, and task-based communication activities. Various kinds of authentic objects can also be used in a communicative language teaching from realia such as signs, magazines, and newspapers, as maps, pictures, symbols, graphs, and charts (Richards, 2001).

Objectives of the Study

The aim of study was to distinguish Student's Motivation & Attitude towards English language learning with particular reference to English Major Students at Dire Dawa University. The study also targeted to address the following specific objectives.

- To identify students attitude towards English language
- To identify students attitude towards English language learning
- To identify student's attitude towards the English language teachers
- To identify students attitude towards classroom activities
- To identify whether students are motivated instrumentally or integratively to study English language

Methodology

This study was conducted to identify English major students attitude and motivation towards English language learning. The basic type of this research was descriptive. According to Kothari CR, (2004) & Kumar (2011), descriptive research targets to describe existing or obtained data on particular issue. Thus, considering nature of the study and the nature of questions developed, quantitative research designs was used to analyze the collected data. Moreover, descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation were employed to measure respondents' attitude.

Participants

The subject of the study was English major students (1st year, 2nd year, and 3rd year) of Dire Dawa University. The participants of the study were a total of 51 students. Since students' number is small, all English major students' were deliberately selected to be the participants of the study. It is to mean that including all subjects on the study likely provides genuine information and it is manageable to administer and analyze the designed questionnaire over the particular topic.

Data Collection Tools

To this study, questionnaire was employed to obtain information on English major students' attitudes and motivation towards learning English language. It is believed that questionnaire provides a broad overview of attitudinal characteristics of learners. Accordingly, the researcher developed 35 close ended questions and administered to the target students on six variable of the study namely: student's attitude towards English language, student's attitude towards English language learning, student's attitude towards the English language

teachers, student's attitude towards classroom activities & students motivation: instrumental & integrative. Kumar, (2011) further claims that questionnaire is less expensive in terms of finance, time, human and financial resources to be administered. Furthermore, it gives greater anonymity since there is no face-to-face interaction between respondents and researcher as well as it fosters likelihood of obtaining the expected information where sensitive questions are asked (Ibid). On the Other hand, Bhattacharjee (2012) & Kumar (2011) recommended Likert scale for worded statement uses to measure respondents' attitude over the particular subject. Accordingly a 5point Likert scale attitude questions were employed to which respondents can indicate their extent of agreement or disagreement on the given scheme. (Strongly Agree, Agree, Neutral, Disagree, and Strongly Disagree). The researcher also evaluates the reliability of questionnaire by using Cronbach's Alpha for each item. The result indicates a good reliability consistence of item because all items developed to assess the variables are greater than 0.7 as it indicated below.

Table 1: List of Variables with their Cronbach's Alpha

Variables	N of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Attitude towards English language	5	0.743
Attitude towards English language learning	7	0.812
Attitude towards the English language teachers	8	0.725
Attitude towards classroom activities	7	0.761
Students motivation to study English language: Instrumental motivation	4	0.711
Students motivation to study English language: Integrative motivation	4	0.727

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics of the Obtained Data

Variables	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Students Attitude towards English language	51	4.0196	.65636
Students attitude towards learning English language	51	3.9804	.70771
Students attitude towards English language teachers	51	3.9020	1.35100
Attitude towards classroom activities	51	3.8095	1.18103
Students motivation (Instrumental motivation)	51	3.8921	1.30229
Students motivation (Integrative motivation)	51	2.0784	1.14412

Analysis, Result & Discussion

As it is stated in the above table 2, the mean score (4.10196) of students attitude towards English language revealed positive outcome which marks respondents positive attitude toward English language. It is to mean that English language is not a difficult as well as students believed that the target language has greater contribution to the society. The subjects had also positively perceived that the target language is important to their future life and they do not feel bored up on English language. The subjects' attitude toward English language and its result also agrees with scholars view. For instance, Naiman et al., (1978) pointed out that successful learners are those who have positive attitude towards the language. They (Naiman et al., 1978) further claimed that talented and brilliant students who have low attitude results low performance up on learning the target language. Similarly, Dornyei (1996) stated that students with more favorable attitudes toward the second language likely to be more successful in the language they are learning unlike students with more unfavorable attitudes. Conversely, language learning is effective when students are not anxious about learning and when students are motivated and believe on their capacity (OECD, 2004). In line with the merit of the target language, scholars have been writing and assured about the positive outcome of English language. Crystal, (2003) pointed out that English is the most widely used language today and it has been a global language for decades. As a result, it is widely used in science and commerce and the demand to learn the language has increased enormously all over the world according Crystal, (2003). For instance, the opening of Indian economy in 1990s has happen together with sudden increase in the demand of English in schools. (Das 2005, cited on NCERT 2006) In general, the obtained result showed positive outlook and revealed that students have positive or desirable attitude toward English language.

With regards to students' attitude towards English language learning, the mean value (3.9804) has also depicted positive attitude. This indicated that respondents have interest of learning English. Similarly, students agreed that the target language provides the intended knowledge, builds their confidence, and changes their future life. In addition, learners have high motivation towards learning English language and they feel happy upon learning English as well as they thought that learning a target language is worthy time. Scholars have shown also the same outcome on this issue for example, Pan, Zang and Wu (2010) & Spolsky (1969), claimed that students outlook to learn the target language must be positive if the student desires to learn a language. Gardner and Lambert (1972) have also pointed out that students who show a negative attitude towards second language learning are students who are the one that do not wish to learn or speak the language. Therefore, this

may show how much attitude influence students' success in learning the target language.

In line with students' attitude towards English language teachers, the obtained mean is 3.9020 and revealed good attitude. Students thought that their English teachers are supportive and provide various activities in the classroom. Furthermore, students were also evident about their teachers teaching methodology and their language competence. They found that teachers' teaching methodologies applied in the classroom are the methodologies they made them to learn more and to be effective in getting the intended knowledge and skills of the target language. On the other hand, respondents' response depicted that group works were also employed in classroom; students are also given immediate feedback and correction by their English teacher in the classroom. In language, teachers play very important roles in attracting students' attention by creating interest among the students. The teacher should play various roles such as learner, facilitator, assessor, manager and evaluator. (Archana S. 2016). Besides such crucial functions, teachers' roles are important in helping students develop autonomy learning by engaging students on different activities. Before conducting teaching, a teacher has first place himself or herself as learner and thinks as learners perspectives as get student interest (Archana S. 2016)

Concerning Students attitude towards contents of English language lessons, the respondents response and the obtained mean value (3.8095) indicated desirable outcome. Accordingly, courses students provided in English class are interesting and favorable to their potential. Moreover, class activities that are engaged in classroom are interesting as well as valuable and they give due attention to lesson they engaged. They also found classroom activities in the way they expect to learn. Regarding students motivation in learning English language, the mean score instrumental motivation (3.8921) inclines to positive result while the value for integrative motivation revealed negative outcome (Mean, 2.0784). It is mean that students desire to learn English is to get a get job easily, to make it their future carrier, to go for further study and to get a good job with high salary. According to Gardner and Lambert, (1992) students can be motivated instrumentally to get social and economic reward in learning a language. Conversely, students are integratively motivated to learn the language when a student wishes to speak English, as of English people and wishes to integrate and be recognized as one of the members of the targeted language. (Falk, 1978)

Conclusion

This study concerned to explore attitude and motivation of students towards English Language learning. Most of the scholars agreed that attitude and motivation are an essential part of learning a language. To this study, from the result obtained, it can be concluded that students have positive attitudes towards English language in general. Similarly, the outcome of students' result depicted positive outlook on English language learning. Students result also revealed desirable response on English language teachers as well as classroom activities. With regards to students' motivation, the obtained result indicted that students are instrumentally motivated to study English language. Finally, the researcher would like to recommend that teaching is not getting in front of the class; a teacher needs to be doing more to get students in taking an active role in their learning. Moreover, a teacher shouldn't spend much time to talk rather let students to interact with the activities. In order to grasp the intended knowledge and skills, a student has to develop interest towards the target language. In doing so, a teacher has to play an important role in bringing desirable attitude and motivation in teaching and learning process.

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