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International Journal of Engineering Technology Research & Management

ATTITUDES AND MOTIVATION TO LEARN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE

Annie A. Parmis

Cheryl M. Catindoy

Kevin S. Perero

Department of Liberal Arts and Behavioral Sciences
Visayas State University, Baybay City, Leyte Philippines
gravoso.annie@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

This study was an exploration of the attitudes and motivation to learn the English language among first year Bachelor of Arts in English Language Studies (ABELS) students at the Visayas State University (VSU). The first set of data on attitudes toward English language learning was gathered from forty (40) participants who were given a self-report questionnaire adopted from the study of Boonrangsri et al (2004). The design of the study is quantitative in nature, descriptive, and inferential as well. Results showed that even if the respondents have different personality traits, this study found out that there are much more positive attitudes from negative attitudes with regard to learning the language. Furthermore, students still viewed the English subject vital in their academics. The second set of data on motivation was gathered from forty-one (41) ABELS students at VSU. The study followed a descriptive survey method and data were gathered using a questionnaire adopted from Kitjaroonchai, N. and Kitjaroonchai, T. (2012). Results showed that 51% of the respondents were high motivated, 41% were extremely high motivated, and only 7% were extremely low motivated. This implies that students were eager and particular in learning the English language. Findings also revealed that somehow the difference in sex, either male or female, is not related to the respondents' attitudes and motivation to learn the English language.

KEYWORDS: attitudes, motivation, language learning

INTRODUCTION

Knowing a language can help one to express opinions, hopes, and even dreams (Abidin et al, 2012). In a language learning context, there are various factors that influence the learning process such as motivations, attitudes, anxiety, learning achievements, aptitude, intelligence, age, personalities, and the like (Shansi 2008). The matter of learners' attitudes is acknowledged as one of the most important factors that impact on learning a language (Fakeye, 2010). Besides the intellectual perspective, the nature of language learning has psychological and social aspects and depends primarily on the learners' motivation and attitudes toward learning the target language (Padwick, 2010). The ability of 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. English language learners have varying degrees of motivation based on their beliefs, such as their beliefs in the importance of learning English and their beliefs in their abilities (Dornyei, 2005). Certain teaching methods and tasks can also affect student motivation. Being motivated to learn the English language and to exhibit a positive attitude are considered crucial for the ABELS students and such can serve as one great challenge in pursuing their degree related to the English language.

OBJECTIVES

Generally, this study was to determine the students' attitudes and motivation to learn the English language. Specifically, it aimed to:

1. Determine the students' sex;
2. Determine the students' attitudes and motivation to learn the English language; and

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3. Determine the relationship between the students' sex and their attitudes and motivation to learn the English language.

Theoretical Framework of the Study

The Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) by Fishbein and Ajzen (1975) described the relationship between attitudes, beliefs, norms, intentions, and behavior. Attitudes toward behavior is a function of two factors: beliefs about the consequences of the behavior and the affective evaluation of those consequences (Dillon and Morris, 1996). Thus for the study of the students' attitudes toward English language learning, it is theorized that positive attitudes can lead to a more productive learning of a certain language. In Gardner's Motivation Theory (1985), Dornyei (2001) commented that motivation includes three elements: motivational intensity, desire to learn the language, and attitudes toward learning the language.

METHODOLOGY

Data were gathered using two self-report questionnaires. The first was adopted from Boonrangsri et al (2004) for the respondents' attitudes toward learning the English language. The second was adopted from Kitjaroonchai, N. and Kitjaroonchai, T. (2012) for the respondents' motivation to learn the English language. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. Mann Whitney u test and Phi correlation were used to determine relationships among the variables.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

It is a given fact that male and female students have distinct attitudes toward English language learning. This study catered both of their views and attitudes regardless of the higher number of females among the respondents. Results showed that respondents strongly agreed on the following item indicators: (8) I like to practice speaking English the way native speakers do; (11) Being good in English will help me study other subjects well; (17) Studying English makes me able to create new thoughts; (20) English subject has the content that covers many fields of knowledge; (25) I feel proud when studying the English language; and (28) Knowing English is an important goal in my life. Findings imply that the respondents considered the English subject as vital and helpful in their search for knowledge. Meanwhile, respondents answered "strongly disagree" to the following item indicators: (9) When I miss my English class, I never ask my friends or teachers for the homework or what has been taught; (13) Frankly, I study English just to pass exams; (15) Studying English does not help me communicate in English effectively; (16) I cannot apply the knowledge from English subjects in my real life; (22) To be honest, I really have little interest in my English class; (24) Studying foreign languages like English is not enjoyable; and (27) I am not interested in studying English. Results imply that the respondents regarded the English language as an important subject in their studies, and that to have learned the English language could help them communicate effectively. Results further revealed that there is no significant relationship between the students' sex and their attitudes toward English language learning. This is supported by Fakeye's study (2010) which found out that the students' attitude is not sex-related when it comes to English language learning. On the other hand, findings also revealed that 51% of the respondents were high motivated, 41% extremely high motivated, and only 7% were extremely low motivated. This implies that the respondents are eager and particular in learning the English language for their future career and as a tool for communication as well. Moreover, results showed that the sex and motivation of the students has a positive linear relationship although it is weak. The Phi coefficient implies that females tend to have higher motivation than male students. This research corresponds to Hashwani's study (2008) which revealed that girls were slightly more motivated to learn the English language than the boys.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We extend our grateful hearts to our parents, to DLABS faculty and staff, and to the participants of this study. We also thank our friends and relatives for their encouragement and support. Above all, we thank God and His angels for guidance and providence.

CONCLUSION

This study has come to conclude that the respondents have different traits when it comes to their attitudes and motivation to learn the English language, and that there are much more positive perceptions with regard to the application of what they have learned. In addition, both male and female can consider and reflect from both positive and negative attitudes and as to whatever motivation they have in store to learn the English language.

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