

The Relationship Between Attitudes and Achievement in SL

(A Case Study of Students at the University of Qatar)*

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Introduction

Attitudes and motivation are considered important factors in Language Acquisition (LA). Learners' attitudes towards speakers of Target Language (TL) and the TL itself have been the subject of intensive research in applied linguistics and related disciplines. However, the results are not clear. Spolsky (1969), Gardner and Lambert (1972)¹, Gardner et al (1992), De-Klerk and Bosch (1993) and Abu-Rabia (1995) have found that integrative attitude is positively related to achievement in language proficiency.

An integrative motive is employed when learners wish to integrate themselves within the culture of the second language group, to identify themselves with and become a part of that society. The conclusion we may draw from the studies noted above is that integrative attitudes may indeed be an important requirement for successful language learning. Moreover, some teachers and researchers have even gone so far as to claim that integrative attitude is absolutely essential for successful SLL.

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However, Oller et al (1977) find instrumental attitude to be the best predictor of language proficiency in an SL setting. Lukmani (1972), and Gardner (1991) suggest that there are conditions under which instrumental motivation leads to more successful SLL than integrative motivation does. Gardner and Lambert have introduced the concept of instrumental motivation in

which the learner is motivated to learn an L2 for utilitarian purposes, (e.g. furthering a career, improving social status or meeting an educational requirement). More research on the interrelationships of these factors seems to be needed.

The Present Study

The study is an investigation of the influence of attitude on the acquisition of an SL by female Qatari students² majoring in English at the University of Qatar. It is a cross-sectional study since it examines a cross-section of learners at different levels of learning (ranging from the low intermediate to advanced level).

Four attitudinal variables/types (general, expectations, instrumental and integrative) were singled out for detailed investigation. The study attempts to find answers to the following questions:

- a) Is there a correlation between attitudinal factors and achievement in English subjects?
- b) Is there a correlation between attitudinal factors and years spent in learning English?
- c) Is there a correlation between attitudinal factors, achievement in English and years of studying?

The sample consists of 100 female students, majoring in English, in the Department of English and Modern European Languages at the University of Qatar. They are all studying English as an SL in a foreign context: Qatar. The sample represents more or less, all levels, i.e. high beginners/low intermediate as well as advanced. The students also represent different levels according to the year that they registered in the department. The learners could be

divided into four groups as follows:

1. First year : Students : 1 - 25
2. Second year : Students : 26 - 50
3. Third year : Students : 51 - 75
4. Fourth year : Students : 76 - 100

They are all learning English through specialized ESL instruction with limited degrees of exposure to English in a host-language environment. Outside class, the learners have variable chances to use English communicatively.³

Although the group differs considerably both in language and local culture from English language and culture, the learners' exposure to/familiarity with Western language and culture through the media and other means has probably diminished this gap (i.e. cultural distance, Byram et al 1991) considerably.

Data

The researchers compiled a questionnaire to test the questions mentioned earlier. It was given to colleagues at the University of Qatar for evaluation. The conformity among the evaluators was 85 percent. Few items were adjusted accordingly. The result of these processes produced the first draft of the questionnaire which was tested in a pilot study.

The pilot study was carried out in the Spring semester of the academic year 1994/1995 involving 100 students studying in the English Department. Having analysed the results according to individual items on the questionnaire, some items were not included in the final form of the questionnaire because they were invaluable while others were added. All of these processes resulted in the present form of the questionnaire with 67 items (Appendix).

Variables

As it was mentioned above this study considers four attitudinal variables/types. They are as follows:

- 1) General (items 1, 7, 13, 15, 18, 20, 21, 23 25, 27, 29, 36, 37, 39, 42, 45, 53, 59, 60 and 64).
- 2) Integrative (items 2, 4, 5, 6, 11, 38, 40, 47, 50, 52, 56, 58, 62, 63 and 66).
- 3) Instrumental (items 3, 8, 9, 10, 12, 14, 16, 19, 22, 24, 28, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 41, 43, 44, 46, 48, 49, 51, 54, 57, 61 and 65).
- 4) Expectations (items 17, 26, 35, 55 and 67).

Data Treatment

For the analysis of the data, the SPSSX (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) was used especially frequencies, factor analysis, reliability, breakdown with analysis of variance and Pearson correlation.

Results

Correlation coefficients were compiled. Table 2.1 reveals the results.

-- Correlation Coefficients --

	Y	AVG
1	-.0954 (100) P= .345	-.0222 (100) P= .827
2	-.2198 (100) P= .028	-.0293 (100) P= .772
3	-.1968 (100) P= .050	-.0225 (100) P= .824
4	-.1904 (100) P= .058	.1971 (100) P= .049
	-.2200 (100) P= .028	.0126 (100) P= .901

Coefficient / (Cases) / 2-tailed Significance

. " is printed if a coefficient cannot be computed

Table 2.1

Variability According to Attitudinal Factors (i.e. Attitude as a Factor)

One of the hypotheses of this study is to examine the learners' attitudinal factors and achievement in English. Since this hypothesis is testable, its Null Hypothesis is stated as:

H₀: There is no significant correlation between the attitudinal factors and learners' achievement in English; i.e. achievement in English is similar for learners with different attitudinal variables. For example, learners who are integratively motivated are similar in achievement as those who are instrumentally motivated.

When attitudinal factors and average (achievement in English) were analyzed within each level no positive correlation between achievement and attitudinal factors was found. The only significant correlation found was between the fourth attitudinal variable/factor (i.e. Expectation) and achievement, with a probability value of (0.049). Hence, there are no significant differences in achievement in English by the learners as a function of the first three attitudinal variables (i.e. General, Integrative and Instrumental). Thus, the Null Hypothesis stated above, is, then, accepted rather than its working hypothesis.

Variability According to Time (Level/Year of Learning)

In this section we investigate the influence of the time factor on the attitudes of learners. This hypothesis is testable, thus its Null Hypothesis is stated as follows:

H₀: There is no significant difference in the attitudes at each level. Hence, the learners' attitudes in Year 1 to Year 4 is the same.

Table (2.1) reveals that learners' attitude changes according to years spent in learning the language. Hence, the Null Hypothesis is rejected in favour of its working hypothesis which states that variability in attitude does exist due to time spent in learning English, i.e. the learner's attitudes towards the target language changes as he spends more time in learning that language.

Tests for Significant Differences

Statistical differences between the four levels were mainly ascertained by the use of Analysis of Variance (ANOVA). Following Guilford and Frucheter (1978:223-224) and Hatch and Farhady (1982:119), ANOVA as a statistical test was used to compute the interaction among the various elements.

Analysis of Variance

Results shown below are for the interaction of each attitudinal variable by achievement by level.

Source of variation	Sum of Squares	Mean DF	Sig Square	F	Sig of F
Main Effects	601.293	7	85.899	1.620	.140
Y	145.911	3	48.637	.917	.436
AVG	452.933	4	113.233	2.135	.083
Explained	601.293	7	85.899	1.620	.140
Residual	4879.707	92	53.040		
Total	5481.000	99	55.364		

**Table 2.2. Interaction of General Attitude
by Achievement by Year/Level**

***** ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE *****

X2
by Y
AVG

UNIQUE sums of squares
All effects entered simultaneously

Source of variation	Sum of Squares	Mean DF	Sig Square	F	Sig of F
Main Effects	932.948	7	133.278	1.622	.139
Y	373.041	3	124.347	1.513	.216
AVG	391.238	4	97.809	1.190	.320
Explained	932.948	7	133.278	1.622	.139

Residual	7559.962	92	82.174
Total	8492.910	99	85.787

**Table 2.3. Interaction of Integrative Attitude
by Achievement by Level/Year**

*** * * ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE * * ***

X3
by Y
AVG

UNIQUE sums of squares
All effects entered simultaneously

Source of variation	Sum of Squares	Mean DF	Sig Square	F	of F
Main Effects	2356.410	7	336.630	1.817	.093
Y	776.844	3	258.948	1.397	.249
AVG	1354.540	4	338.635	1.828	.130
Explained	2356.410	7	336.630	1.817	.093
Residual	17047.300	92	185.297		
Total	19403.710	99	195.997		

**Table 2.4. Interaction of Instrumental Attitude
by Achievement by Level/Year**

***** ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE *****

X4
by Y
AVG

UNIQUE sums of squares
All effects entered simultaneously

Source of variation	Sum of Squares	Mean DF	Sig Square	F	of F
Main Effects	106.770	7	15.253	2.080	.053
Y	55.429	3	18.476	2.520	.063
AVG	26.580	4	6.645	.906	.464

Explained	106.770	7	15.253	2.080	.053
Residual	674.540	92	7.332		
Total	781.310	99	7.892		

**Table 2.5. Interaction of Expectations Attitude
by Achievement by Level/Year**

***** ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE *****

X
by Y
AVG

UNIQUE sums of squares
All effects entered simultaneously

Source of variation	Sum of Squares	Mean DF	Sig Square	F	Sig of F
Main Effects	9340.662	7	1334.380	1.883	.081
Y	3509.079	3	1169.693	1.650	.183
AVG	4875.352	4	1218.838	1.720	.152
Explained	9340.662	7	1334.380	1.883	.081
Residual	65206.648	92	708.768		
Total	74547.310	99	753.003		

**Table 2.6. Interaction of Attitudinal Factors (combined)
by Achievement by Level/Year**

Looking at ANOVA Tables (2.2 - 2.6) we will notice that the F value for the interaction of the individual attitudinal factors by achievement by Level is significant (F = .083 for General Attitude; F = .093 for Instrumental Attitude; F = .053 for Expectations). The interaction of

Integrative attitude by achievement by Level was not significant. Significant interaction was also found for all attitudinal factors (combined) by achievement by Level ($F = .081$). This is an indication that it is not just Level difference or attitudinal factors which are responsible for variability in achievement, but both factors (i.e. Level and Attitudinal Factors) together appear to influence learners' average/achievement in English.

Discussion

The results of this study correlate with Savignon's study (1972) which reported no correlation between early attitudes and measures of final achievement of American college students. However, as the students progressed, the correlation between their attitudes and their achievement increased. Similar findings are reported in Holmquist's study (1993) which examined the relationship between achievement in foreign language and aspects of students' attitudes and background. Holmquist states that "Questions dealing with opinion and attitude also reveal differences between basic and more advanced students" (p.36).

Table (2.1) shows that learners' attitude change according to the number of years spent in learning the language. Three attitudinal factors/variables (i.e. Integrative, Instrumental and Expectations) show significant correlation with Level/Time/Year. The fourth factor (i.e. General) shows no such relationship. This is mainly because learners' attitudes are shaped as they progress in learning the language. So they may have integrative or instrumental attitudes. There is no place for general attitude as time passes.

The above remarks (i.e. Learners' attitudes change according to years spent in learning the language) conform with the findings reported by Hermann (1980) in her study of 750 German children learning EFL. She adduced evidence which suggested that those children who had been studying English for five years showed a significantly higher level of positive attitude towards the target culture than a group who just started to study English. Moreover, the lower-proficiency learners showed significantly more prejudice than the higher-proficiency group. Hermann (1980:249) formulated a 'resultive hypothesis' to explain her findings: "the mere satisfaction a learner derives from his achievement of the learning task may influence his attitude to the ethnolinguistic group in question and even result in a change to such attitude".

Referring to Table (2.1) we notice that no positive correlation between achievement and attitudinal factors was found except for the fourth variable (i.e. Expectations). The results of the studies of the effect of attitudinal factors on SLA are inconclusive. There are different reports suggesting somehow contradicting results.

One of the best known and historically significant studies of attitudes and motivation in SL learning was carried out by Gardner and Lambert (1972). Over a period of 12 years, they extensively studied foreign language learners in Canada and in several parts of the US and the Philippines in an effort to determine how attitudinal and motivational factors effect language learning success. Motivation was examined as a factor of a number of different kinds of attitudes. Two different clusters of attitudes divided two basic types of motivation: instrumental and integrative. The first refers to learning a language as a means for attaining instrumental goals: furthering a career, reading technical material, translation and so forth. An integrative attitude/motive⁴, on the other hand, is employed when learners wish to integrate themselves within the culture of the SL group, to identify themselves within and become a part of that society.

Many of Lambert's studies (1972) and one study by Spolsky (1969) found that integrative motivation generally accompanied higher scores on proficiency tests in a foreign language. Abu-Rabia (1995) found gender differences among the Canadian Arab students with regard to the type of attitudes that motivated them to study English: female students showed predominantly integrative attitudes toward learning English in the Canadian society. Whereas male students showed predominantly instrumental attitudes. Clement et al's (1977) results generally support the theory that motivation to learn an SL is dependent on favourable or integrative attitudes to the SL community.

The conclusion we may draw from the studies noted above is that integrative attitudes may

indeed be an important requirement for successful language learning. Some researchers have even gone so far as to claim that such a factor is absolutely essential for successful SL learning. However, Strong (1984) maintained that advanced children were more integrative orientated to target language groups than beginners, supporting the position that integrative attitudes are a result of SLA rather than a cause.

The argument that integrative attitudes are more powerful than instrumental attitudes was soon exposed to new challenges as new evidences began to accumulate. Lukmani (1972) demonstrated that among Marathi-speaking Indian students learning English in India, those with higher instrumental attitudes/ motivation scored higher in tests of English proficiency. Braj Kachru (1977, 1992) has noted that Indian English is but one example of 'a variety of Englishes', which, especially in Third World countries where English has become an international language, can be acquired very successfully for instrumental reasons alone. Gardner himself with his associates, have recently found that certain contexts point toward instrumental orientation as an effective motive for language success (Gardner and MacIntyre 1991) and that others favour integrative motivation (Gardner et al 1992). Burstall (1975) found that her subjects' achievement in French was linked to both types (i.e. integrative and instrumental) attitudes.

These reports suggest that success in SLA may breed integrative and positive attitudes towards the TL group, just as Strong (1984) has contended that success contributes to heightened motivation to acquire an SL. However, there are other studies which reported different findings. In an attempt to see the same sort of results would be obtained in a foreign language context, Chihara and Oller (1978) studied attitudes of Japanese students of EFL living in Osaka. Results showed mostly weak correlations with only two negatively significant, between factors distilled from the attitude measures and attained FEL proficiency. A similar finding was also reported by Cooper and Fishman (1977:272) who found that positive attitudes towards English speakers were

largely irrelevant to Israelis learning and using English.

Gardner (1980) offers an explanation for these apparently contradictory findings: the different social context would appear to influence the outcomes. The effect of attitudes might be much stronger in such a context where there is much more of an opportunity for contact between learners and TL speakers than in a foreign language context where the opportunities are more limited. Clement and Kruidier (1983) have offered another explanation for such discrepant findings: ambiguity in the definition of integrative and instrumental attitudes. Au (1988) reviewed 27 different studies of the integrative/instrumental construct and concluded that both its theoretical underpinnings and the instruments used to measure motivation were suspect.

However, such variable findings in empirical investigations do not necessarily invalidate the integrative/ instrumental construct. They simply point out that there is no single means of learning an SL. Some learners in some context are more successful in learning a language if they are integratively oriented, and others in different contexts benefit from an instrumental orientation. Also, the findings suggest that SLL is rarely motivated by attitudes that are exclusively instrumental or exclusively integrative (i.e. the two types are not necessarily mutually exclusive). Most situations involve a mixture of both types (Brown 1994).

Our results concerning the first general aim of this investigation is logical. Since those who expected to be good at the language are better in achievement than those who didn't. A plausible explanation is that learners know their abilities so if they are good at the language they expect to be better in the future. Therefore, we find that there is a significant correlation between the fourth attitudinal factor (i.e. Expectations) and achievement in English.

Turning now to aim 'c' (i.e. to find out whether there is a correlation between attitudinal factors, achievement and years of studying), the results show that there is an interaction of each

individual factor (except Integrative attitude) by achievement by Level. This indicates that it is not merely time spent learning the language or attitudinal factors which cause variability in achievement in English, but both factors together seem to influence the learners' achievement. Since the interaction effect overrides the main effect(s) (here attitudinal factors), we cannot make strong claims that attitudinal factors alone affected the learners' achievement.

Conclusion

The findings of the present study support a number of theoretical and databased studies of ESL/EFL learnings. Findings for both attitude and background support Gardner's (1979:193) hypothesis that the learning of a second language in the 'school situation' must be viewed as a social/psychological phenomenon. Moreover, results for items of attitude indicate that both the integrative or personal and instrumental or practical variables/factors may be expected to yield meaningful effects. The findings, also, support studies indicating that specific social and psychological factors can be linked to measures of achievement such as year/level of study. Finally, our results, also, suggest that the relationship between attitudes and achievement in ESL/EFL may be causal.

Notes

1. Gardner & Lambert did not distinguish between motivation and attitudes in their early work. (Freeman & Long 1994:175).
2. Women were taken because there was not enough data from men. (Altogether men were 25 students presenting the total number of male students studying in the department at the time of the study.)
3. In terms of learning/acquisition (Krashen 1981 & 1982) distinction, some subjects can be considered to be more formal learners, mainly those who didn't have the chance to experience English in a host environment from native speakers of English. Corder (1973:58) calls such learners 'captive learners' where the only possible input available for learners to draw on is the classroom. Other learners had different ranges of exposure to English in various host environments (e.g. U.S. and U.K.). This, however, doesn't entail that all learners who lived for X period of time benefited from it. Also, since there is no strong evidence to suggest that such differences influence attitudes they were not considered as likely to interfere with the aims of the study.
4. Ellis (1985) notes that motivation and attitude are often indistinct in the literature.

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