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# EFL Students' Attitudes Towards Learning a Foreign Language at A Libyan University

**Alfetouri Masuod Alfetouri Khadeer**

Department of English Language - Faculty of Education - Zawia University  
Azzawia -Libya

EMAIL: a.khadeer@zu.edu.ly

## ABSTRACT

The history of attitudes toward foreign language learning is not very long. This study investigated the attitudes toward learning English of seventh-semester students at the University of Zawia, Libya, and its possible impact on English learning in terms of positive and negative preferences. The study was conducted analytically, using a questionnaire as the data collection tool. The sample for the study is a group of 62 college students, aged 19-21. They studied English as a subject at the university. This research shows that students are aware of the place of English in the world and its role as a tool for international language and communication purposes. The study concludes with learners demonstrating an overall positive attitude towards learning English.

### Keywords:

- Attitudes
- Learning a Foreign Language
- A Libyan University

مواقف وسلوكيات الطلاب اتجاه تعلمهم للغة الغريبة في الجامعات الليبية

الفيثوري مسعود الفيتوري

قسم اللغة الانجليزية - كلية التربية - جامعة الزاوية

الزاوية - ليبيا

Email: t.hamoma@zu.edu.ly

الملخص:

إن تاريخ تعلم انطباع الطلاب باتجاه تعلم اللغة الأجنبية ليس طويلاً. بحثت هذه الدراسة عن الانطباعات والشعور تجاه اللغة الإنجليزية لطلاب الفصل السابع في جامعة

الزاوية، ليبيا، وتأثيرها المحتمل على تعلم اللغة الإنجليزية من حيث التفضيلات الإيجابية والسلبية. وستجرى الدراسة بصورة وصفية باستخدام استبيان كأداة لجمع البيانات. عينة هذه الدراسة هي مجموعة من 62 طالباً جامعياً تتراوح أعمارهم بين 19 و21 عاماً. درست اللغة الإنجليزية كمادة في الجامعة. يُظهر هذا البحث أن الطلاب على دراية بمكانة اللغة الإنجليزية في العالم ودورها كأداة لأغراض اللغة والاتصال الدولية. وتختتم الدراسة بإظهار المتعلمين موقفاً إيجابياً عاماً تجاه اللغة الإنجليزية وتعلم اللغة الإنجليزية.

### Introduction:

Along with the global spread of English and the wide recognition of World English, a whole breadth of studies has been conducted to explore the attitudes of learners toward different varieties of English. In Libya, however, the researcher conducted a pioneer study to examine this issue. To address this gap, this study investigates Libyan University students' attitudes toward learning English in terms of the behavioral, cognitive, and emotional aspects.

It also explores whether there is any significant difference in the student's attitudes toward the English language based on their demographic profiles i.e., gender, field, and year of study. The students who were able to participate in this research were a group 62 of seventh semester students at Zawia University in Libya.

It is considered that language learning is the foundation of human life. Knowing a language allows us to convey our thoughts, hopes, and even dreams (Tavil, 2009). In a foreign Language learning context, there are various factors that influence the learning process, including motivation, attitudes, anxiety, learning achievements, aptitudes, intelligence, age, and personalities. (Gardner, 1972; Lambert, 2006, cited in Shams, 2008). The matter of the learner's attitude is acknowledged as one of the most important factors that impact learning language (Fakeye, 2010).

### Problem Statement and Research Objectives

This study looked into the concept of attitude as one of the major affective factors for success in learning a foreign language. More specifically, it investigated university students' attitudes toward

learning the English language, taking into consideration the three aspects of attitude -- **emotional, cognitive, and behavioral**.

Additionally, it attempts to determine the influence of students' demographic profiles -- gender, year, and field of study -- on their attitudes toward learning English.

It is hoped that the results the researchers gleaned from this study will help both teachers and staff in the field of teaching English. It is also important to recognize the factors that help students learn languages, especially foreign languages that are not spoken throughout the Libyan community.

### **Research Methodology:**

The design of this study is quantitative in nature both descriptive and speculative. An adapted questionnaire was used as a means of measurement. Respondents were required to answer all survey questions honestly and provide their thoughts on their attitudes toward learning English in relation to their emotional, cognitive, and behavioral aspects and demographic profile – their gender, age, and field of study.

The instrument was an attitude questionnaire focusing on attitudes toward learning English (showing in the appendix). In addition, the researcher aimed to explore differences in participants' attitudes based on demographic information.

The questionnaire items are partly adapted from the attitude questionnaire used in a study by Boonrangsri, Chuaymankhong, Rermyindee, and Vongchittpinyo (2004). Other elements are taken from the Attitude and Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) developed by Gardner in 1985. There are 30 statements related to attitudes with reference to behavioral (1-10), cognitive (11-20), and emotional (21-30) facets of attitudes. The participants' answers varied from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

### **Reliability and Validity**

A pilot study was done to assess the questionnaire's dependability. For this purpose, 30 students were randomly selected from the target group. These students did not participate in actual questionnaire responses reported here. It was compulsory to present personal data using the questionnaire items. Questionnaire reliability

and validity coefficients were determined by analyzing item reliability with the help of the Statistical Package for Social Science Programs (SPSS), to insure make that the data collected from the questionnaire were valid for the researcher in this research.

### **Previews study:**

In their study of students' sentiments, Boonarangsri et al. (2004) discovered that students overwhelmingly had good attitudes regarding learning English as a foreign language. Their upbeat demeanor leads one to believe that their language study is progressing well.

Furthermore, Ghazali, Setia, Muthusamy, and Jusoff (2009) discovered in their study of ESL students' opinions about texts and instructional techniques employed in literature classes that students had generally positive attitudes regarding text choices. They were, however, less enthused about teachers' instructional approaches.

On the other side, Abidin, Pour-Mohammadi, and Alzwari (2012) conducted a study in Libya on secondary school students' attitudes about studying English in terms of behavioral, cognitive, and emotional factors. This study discovered that there are three types of attitudes: cognitive, behavioral, and emotional. The individuals had poor opinions concerning English learning. There were statistically significant attitudinal variations in the demographic profile for gender and field of study, but not year of study. Later, they advise using current resources and establishing a good environment to help pupils develop a positive attitude about studying English.

### **Findings and Discussion:**

The behavioral aspects contained ten elements, and responses were more positive than negative items. Six of the ten had positive responses, while four were negative. Furthermore, only a few respondents were 'undecided' about their behavioral approach to English language acquisition. There were ten elements in the cognitive components as well; four of the responses were negative and the remaining six were positive. Only a small percentage of respondents chose to remain "undecided" on their answers, with the majority of replies to the cognitive elements of English language learning being favorable. Just 2.2% of respondents strongly disagreed with the

assertion that "English helps me communicate well," while 55% and 42% strongly agreed and agreed (slightly or moderately), respectively.

Emotional attitudes made up the third and final attitude component, which also included ten elements. Responses only two of them were negative; the remaining eight were positive. One statement used to assess respondents' emotional attachment to the target language is "Knowing English is an important goal in my life." Of the respondents, 48% strongly agreed with this statement, followed by 42 who strongly disagreed, and 0% highly disagreed.

This study was comparable to Eshghinejad's (2016) investigation, which employed the identical questionnaire and discovered favorable opinions in his findings. This study's findings are also consistent with those of Al-Mamun et al (2012). Additionally, their study demonstrated that students' views toward learning a foreign language were favorable, because they believed that studying English made a good impression on other people.

This study was significant because, in contrast to the studies cited in this article, the research participants varied widely in terms of their educational backgrounds and age. As a result, it represents a novel attempt to examine the attitudes of EFL students because:

- 1- The students' age ranged from 19 to 21 years old.
- 2- The educational backgrounds of the interviewees ranged from Pre-Intermediate to Masters.

The study's most significant finding was that while the respondents' ages varied, their academic backgrounds were consistent—all of them were university students looking to quench their desire for learning a foreign language, in this case English.

### **Conclusion:**

The secret to cultivating a happy mindset is being open to learning something new without fear. In a similar vein, having a good attitude toward the language in question is crucial for learning English or any other language efficiently. The success or failure of the process of acquiring any skill is determined by the attitudes of the learners; this is also true for language acquisition, as ultimately, an individual's tendency towards valuing anything determines the outcome. One of the most important components of learning a foreign language

successfully is attitude. In order to better understand the participants' perspectives, the researchers focused on three domains: behavioral, cognitive, and emotional. The students' opinions regarding learning English as a foreign language were largely good, according to the results. Given their optimistic outlook, it may be concluded that their language acquisition is proceeding satisfactorily.

It is anticipated that Libyan university students will continue to be dedicated to studying English. This is predicated by the fact that the students saw the English Works certificate course as a chance to advance their English language proficiency, regardless of whether they were previously certified or enrolled in a formal education program in Libya. This demonstrates their dedication to studying the English language as well as their general optimistic outlook. Furthermore, students with a very positive attitude will become proficient in English. Students' motivation to learn English is also influenced by their attitudes. The more positive a student's attitude is, the more motivated they are to learn English. Miftahul Jannah (2022) also states in her research that she finds that one of the factors influencing how well students learn English as a second/foreign language is motivation.

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### Appendix: Questionnaire

In answering these questions, you should mark one alternative for each statement. Which one you choose will indicate your own feeling based on everything you know. Note: there is no right or wrong answer. Items are classified into **Likert Scale** ranging from **Strongly Disagree** to **Strongly Agree**.

NB	Name	Strongly Disagree	Moderately Disagree	Slightly Disagree	Slightly Agree	Moderately Agree	Strongly Agree
1	Speaking English anywhere makes me feel worried.						
2	Studying English helps me to have good relationships with friends.						
3	When I hear a student in my class speaking English well, I like to practice speaking with him/her.						
4	Studying English helps me to improve my personality.						
5	I put off my English homework as much as possible.						
6	I am not relaxed whenever I have to speak in my English class.						
7	I feel embarrassed to speak English in front of other students.						
8	I like to practice English the way native speakers do.						
9	When I miss the class, I never ask my friends or teachers for the homework on what has been taught.						
10	I do not feel enthusiastic to come to class when English is being thought.						



11	Being good at English will help me study other subjects well.						
12	I have more knowledge and more understanding when studying English.						
13	Frankly, I study English just to pass the exams.						
14	In my opinion, people who speak more than one language are very knowledgeable.						
15	Studying English helps me communicate in English effectively.						
16	I cannot apply the knowledge from English subject in my real life.						
17	Studying English makes me able to create new thoughts.						
18	In my opinion, English language is difficult and complicated to learn.						
19	I am not satisfied with my performance in English subject.						
20	English subject has the content that covers many fields of knowledge.						
21	I prefer studying in my mother tongue rather than any other foreign language.						
22	To be honest, I really have little interest in my English class.						
23	I don't get anxious when I have to answer a question in my English class.						
24	Studying foreign languages like English is enjoyable.						
25	I feel proud when studying English						

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	language.						
26	Studying English subject makes me feel more confident.						
27	I am interested in studying English.						
28	Knowing English is an important goal in my life.						
29	I look forward to the time I spend in English class.						
30	Studying English makes me have good emotions.						