

Investigating Secondary Students' Attitude towards Learning English

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Abstract : The aim of this study was to investigate secondary (grades IX and X) students' attitudes towards learning the English language based on the medium of instruction of the school, the gender of the students and the grade level in which they studied. A further aim was to determine students' proficiency in the English language according to their gender, the grade level and the medium of instruction of the school. A survey was used to investigate the attitudes of secondary students towards English language learning. Simple random sampling was employed to obtain a representative sample of the target population for the research study as a comprehensive list of established English medium schools, and newly established English medium schools were available. A questionnaire 'Attitude towards English Language Learning' (AtELL) was adapted from a research study on Libyan secondary school students' attitudes towards learning English language. AtELL was reviewed by experts (n=6) and later piloted on a representative sample of secondary students (n= 160). Subsequently, the questionnaire was modified - based on the reviewers' feedback and lessons learnt during the piloting phase - and directly administered to students of grades 9 and 10 to gather information regarding their attitudes towards learning the English language. Data collection spanned a month and a half. As the data were not normally distributed, the researcher used Mann-Whitney tests to test the hypotheses formulated to investigate students' attitudes towards learning English as well as proficiency in the language across the medium of instruction of the school, the gender of the students and the grade level of the respondents. Statistical analyses of the data showed that the students of established English medium schools exhibited a positive outlook towards English language learning in terms of the behavioural, cognitive and emotional aspects of attitude. A significant difference was observed in the attitudes of male and female students towards learning English where females showed a more positive attitude in terms of behavioural, cognitive and emotional aspects as compared to their male counterparts. Moreover, grade 10 students had a more positive attitude towards learning English language in terms of behavioural, cognitive and emotional aspects as compared to grade 9 students. Nonetheless, students of newly established English medium schools were more proficient in English as gauged by their examination scores in this subject as compared to their counterparts studying in established English medium schools. Moreover, female students were more proficient in English while students studying in grade 9 were less proficient in English than their seniors studying in grade 10. The findings of this research provide empirical evidence to future researchers wishing to explore the relationship between attitudes towards learning language and variables such as the medium of instruction of the school, gender and the grade level of the students. Furthermore, policymakers might revisit the English curriculum to formulate specific guidelines that promote a positive and gender-balanced outlook towards learning English for male and female students.

Keywords : attitude, behavioral aspect of attitude, cognitive aspect of attitude, emotional aspect of attitude

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