

IN THE NAME OF GOD

PRE-UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' ATTITUDE

TOWARD ENGLISH

BY

SHEKOUFE KHODABANDE

THESIS

SUBMITTED TO THE OFFICE OF VICE-CHACELLOR FOR
GRADUATE STUDIES IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS (M.A.)

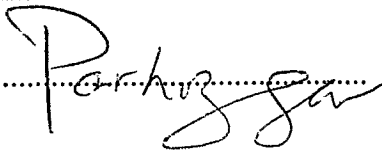
IN

TEACHING ENGLISH

SHIRAZ UNIVERSITY

SHIRAZ, IRAN

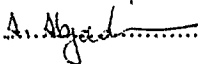
EVALUATED AND APPROVED BY THE THESIS COMMITTEE AS:
EXCELLENT

.....


M.R. PARHIZGAR, Ph.D.,
ASSISTANT PROF. OF TEACHING
ENGLISH (CHAIRPERSON)

.....


M. YAMINI, Ph.D., ASSISTANT. PROF.
OF TEACHING ENGLISYH

.....


A. ABJADIAN, Ph.D., PROF. OF
ENGLISH LITERATURE.

December 2002

EV 891

***AFFECTIONATELY DEDICATED TO
MY PARENTS***

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

First, I would like to express my deepest sense of gratitude to Dr. Parhizgar, my thesis advisor, without whose steadfast support, I would indubitably be unable to come to the end product.

I would also like to convey special thanks to Dr. Yamini whose extremely careful and detailed critical comments on different drafts of the thesis paved the way for the improvement and preparation of the final draft. I would also like to thank Dr. Abjadian my second advisor for reading my draft.

Special thanks are due to those in Dr. Hesabi pre-university center, who helped me to administer the questionnaire in their class time.

I take pleasure in acknowledging my debts to all teachers and professors I have ever had in my life.

ABSTRACT

PRE-UNIVERSITY STUDENTS' ATTITUDE TOWARD ENGLISH

BY:

Shekoufeh Khodabandeh

Among the various variables contributing to second/foreign language acquisition, those related to the learner are considered the most influential, and of all the learners' variables the factors related to the learners' emotions, attitudes and personalities are of utmost importance. The objective of this study is to investigate pre-university students' attitude toward English language, English speaking people, teachers, textbooks, teaching and testing methods and their parent's involvement in their language learning.

The subjects are 356 pre-university students, 197 of them are females and 159 are males. The instrument used is a questionnaire made based on the requirements of this study. It was validated through factor analysis, which identified five major factors. The reliability of the questionnaire was also calculated through test-retest and Alpha method which yielded .78 and .82 as the reliability index respectively.

The results showed

1- There are five underlying factors in the questionnaire. These factors are significantly related to each other and to the total score.

2- Males and females are significantly different on the fourth and fifth factor that is parental involvement, attitude toward English speaking people, and attitude toward testing methods.

3- Students' attitude toward the fourth factor is negative, that is parental involvement and attitude toward English speaking people.

4- Females have a more negative attitude than males toward the fourth and fifth factor.

5- There was no significant difference between males and females' attitudes toward English.

6- On the whole pre-university students' attitude toward English was positive.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Content	Page
ACKNOWLEDGEMENT	iii
ABSTRACT	iv
LIST OF TABLES.....	vi
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS	ix
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION	
1.1 Preliminaries.....	1
1.2 Objectives of the study.....	4
1.3 Significance of the study.....	5
1.4 Organization of the study.....	6
CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF LITRATURE	
2.0 Introduction.....	7
2.1 Approaches to attitudes and motivation.....	7
2.1.1 Socio-psychological approach.....	7
2.1.2 Speech accommodation theory.....	9
2.1.3 Acculturation model.....	9
2.1.4 Monitor model.....	10
2.1.5 Self-determination approach.....	11
2.1.6 Multi-factorial approach.....	11
2.2 Factors contributing to second/foreign language acquisition.....	12
2.3 Attitude.....	13
2.3.1 Attitudes toward learning a foreign language.....	15
2.3.2 Attitudes toward language.....	16

Content	Page
2.3.3 Attitudes toward the speakers.....	18
2.3.4 Attitudes toward the culture.....	20
2.3.5 Parents' attitude and involvement.....	22
2.3.6 Attitudes toward the teacher.....	23
2.4 Attitude change.....	24
2.5 Attitudes and achievement.....	26
 CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY	
3.0 Introduction.....	30
3.1 Participants.....	30
3.2 Instrument.....	30
3.3 Procedure.....	32
 CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION	
4.0 Introduction.....	34
4.1 Factor analysis.....	34
4.2 Correlation results.....	37
4.3 Independent t-test.....	38
4.4 Descriptive statistics.....	39
 CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION ...	
5.1 Introduction.....	43
5.2 Summary.....	43
5.3 Conclusion.....	44
5.4 Implications and Suggestions.....	50
 BIBLIOGRAPHY	55
 APPENDICES.....	63
 ABSTRACT AND TITLE PAGE IN PERSIAN.....	66

LIST OF TABLES

TABLE	PAGE
Table 3.1 number of items for each criteria.....	31
Table 4.1 factor analysis with varimax rotation.....	35
Table 4.2 factors and items related to them.....	36
Table 4.3 correlation coefficient between factors and total.....	37
Table 4.4 independent t-test.....	38
Table 4.5 descriptive statistics for the whole group.....	39
Table 4.6 Descriptive statistics for males and females.....	41

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Df	Degree of Freedom
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
FL	Foreign Language
L2	Target Language
LLSS	Language Learning Strategies
Max	Maximum
Min	Minimum
N	Number
SD	Standard Deviation
Std. error	Standard error

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Preliminaries

Variables contributing to second/foreign language acquisition have been the topic of investigation in the past fifty years. Among the various variables, those related to the learner are considered the most influential, and of all the learner's variables, the factors related to the learner's emotions, attitudes, and personalities are of utmost importance. Affective factors seem to be one of foreign language teachers' biggest worries. This concern is relevant, since, according to the experts in the field, feelings like anxiety, interest and the desire to be or not to be part of the foreign language speaking community may either contribute to or halt foreign language acquisition. Amato (1988) says that the affective domain includes several factors which may influence the learning of a foreign language. According to this author, these factors interact to form patterns, which generally operate in the student's subconscious. These patterns are related to the student's attitude towards learning an FL, the student's motivation to learn an FL and the student's level of anxiety. Chastain (1988) also believes

that the affective domain plays a larger role in developing second language skills than do the cognitive functions

Motivation and attitudes, though elusive and difficult to identify, are major factors within individual learners which affect their study of a second language as well as the manner and depth of their attention while they study it. Attitude toward a foreign language is one of the affective factors that may have a great effect on the learners' acquisition of a second language. Attitude is defined in the literature in different ways. Brown (1987:168) states that "attitudes form a part of ones' perception of self, of others and of the culture in which one lives". Students' attitude toward English includes attitudes toward the speakers of English, their culture, teachers, textbooks, usefulness of English in their life, prestige, and so on. Holmes (1992: 346) asserts that "people develop attitudes toward languages which reflect their views about those who speak the language and the contexts and functions with which they are associated." Herman (1979-80) distinguishes between two types of attitudes, either it is the information about the other ethnolinguistic group which supposedly influences the students attitudinal system or attitude is a direct outcome of the exposure to the foreign language itself; however, Rubin (1975) suggest that if good language learners are successful in communication, their motivation to acquire the necessary tools to continue this communication will increase. This shows that motivation is triggered by success in the language not success resulting from

motivation. So our students come to English classes with different or even mixed attitudes toward English courses, teachers, books, teaching methods and testing. Their attitudes may be positive or negative or even neutral. If their attitudes are positive, they will be more motivated to learn the language; otherwise, they will have problems. Horwitz (1986) asserts that learner anxiety and other negative feelings can be stumbling blocks to learners becoming cognizant of learning and transfer opportunities. Thus providing our learners with the motivation to learn is one of the best steps we can take to facilitate learning success. This is best conveyed by Bruner (1960: 31), "The best way to create interest in a subject is to render it worth knowing, which means to make the knowledge gained usable in one's thinking beyond the situation in which learning has occurred." If students simply do not want to learn or do not like to learn, they will learn a little or they will not perform up to their maximum capacity (Chastian, 1988). Schuman (1975) says that learners' evaluation of their teacher also influences their learning. How the learner's parents view the speakers of the target language and how they feel about their child's acquisition of that language can also affect the child's achievement of the target language. In addition the learner's preferences for his/her own culture or for the foreign culture can affect success in second language learning and a person's motivation for learning a language is also important. Moreover, learners' positive or negative attitude towards the speakers of the target language can

enhance or inhibit language acquisition. Regarding the importance of attitudes in learning a foreign language, this study is concerned with investigating Iranian pre-university students' attitudes toward ways of learning a foreign language, English courses, teachers, textbooks, ways of teaching and testing and their orientations toward English, their parents' involvement in their learning and their parents' attitudes toward learning English.

1.2 Objectives of the study

This study attempts to investigate Iranian pre-university students' attitudes toward English, English speaking people, their culture, English courses, English teachers, high school English textbooks, as well as methods of teaching and testing, English classes, their parents' attitudes toward English and whether they helped their children with this subject. The relationship between all the mentioned variables are also investigated. The study attempts to answer the following questions:

- 1-What is students' attitude toward learning a foreign language and English in specific?
- 2-What is the relationship between students' attitude toward learning a foreign language in general and learning English in particular?
- 3-What are the students' attitudes toward their English teachers, English classes, and their English books?

- 4-What are the relationships between students' attitude toward their teachers, their books and their English classes?
- 5-What are the students' main reasons for learning English, or their orientations toward learning English?
- 6-What is the relationship between learning English as an instrument and learning it for intrinsic reasons?
- 7-What is the students' perception of what learning a foreign language (English) means and how they learn English better?
- 8-What is the relationship between the students' perception of learning a foreign language and the way they learn English better?
- 9-What is the students' attitude toward teaching methods and ways of testing?
- 10-What is the relationship between students' attitude toward teaching methods and testing?
- 11- What are the parents' attitudes toward English and is there any relationship between the parents' attitude and that of their children's?
- 12- What is the relationship between all the mentioned criteria ?

1.3 Significance of the study

With the increasing importance of learning a foreign language, especially English, it seems vital to investigate the problems related to learning English in our high schools. In our country, learning English formally begins at grade two of guidance school, for at least three

hours a week, most of our students and teachers are unsatisfied with their English classes, teachers complain that students are weak and demotivated in learning and students are not satisfied with the classroom atmosphere, teaching methods and testing procedures. Findings of this study would show some sources of problems in the light of students' attitudes toward English, and the results would be useful for the Ministry of education. Accordingly, they should consider the students' attitude in their planning, teachers also should consider the findings in their teaching methods and testing. Writers of high school English textbooks can benefit from the results to show their consideration for the learners' attitudes toward their textbooks.

1.4 Organization of the study

This study is presented in five chapters. Chapter one includes an introduction to the study, main objectives and the significance of the study. Review of literature shapes the second chapter, the most related studies based on different categories are mentioned. Methodology with its subcategories, namely, participants, and procedure which in turn includes data collection and data analysis are presented in chapter three. Findings of the study are included in chapter four. Finally chapter five is devoted to conclusion and discussion of the results, plus giving some suggestions based on the results of the study.