

The Relationship among EFL Teachers, Students' Attitudes & Their Teaching-learning Achievements in English

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Abstract—This study is an attempt to investigate the relationship among attitudes of English language students and teachers towards each other and students' achievement at public female high schools of Rasht. Three-hundred and thirty five English female language students and ten female English language teachers from Rasht high schools participated in this study. Participants' demographic status was also sought as well as their three aspects of attitude (Affective, behavioral, and cognitive). Student questionnaire in this study is based on an adopted one (AMTB) including thirty items in a four-point Likert scale. Teacher questionnaire consisted of nine items on students' study skills, appearance, aptitude, behavior, and intelligence in a four-likert scale. The *Pearson correlation* and *paired sample t-test* were utilized to analyze the data. The findings suggested that female high school students of Rasht hold positive attitude towards their language teacher, and there exist a significant relationship among student-teacher attitude and students' achievement. The implication added to the body of English language learning knowledge and resource available to enrich the learning experience and impact on students' achievement.

Index Terms—attitude, achievement, EFL, teacher, learner

I. INTRODUCTION

Language learning is considered as the basis of human existence that can help us to express our opinions, hopes, and even our dreams (Tavil, 2009). Crystal (1997) stated that attitudes are the feelings people have about their own language or the languages of others. Therefore, language attitude is a construct that shows linguistic behavior in particular.

Greenwald (1989) believed “attitudes are pervasive, predict behavior, are a force in perception and memory, and they serve various psychological functions.” From a psychological point of view, there are three components that construct individual's attitudes (Cherry, 2012). This model is known as the ABC model of attitudes that are Affective, Behavioral, and Cognitive components. According to Eagly and Chaiken (1993), attitude is “a psychological tendency expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favor or disfavor”. Bohner and Wänke (2002) reported “attitudes represent an evaluative response towards an object and can be defined as a summary evaluation of an object or thought.”

A large body of research targeted the correlation between attitude and achievement in Iran (Alavi & Kaivanpanah, 2007; Shirbagi, 2010; Chalak & kassian, 2010; Dehghan & Jalilzadeh, 2011; Saeidi & Rimani Nikou, 2012; Hazratzad & Gheitanchian, 2012; Soleimani & Hanafi, 2013). Generally speaking, all of them admit that learners' positive attitude towards a language determines their success in learning the language. The students' continuous lack of success in a school subject, in particular learning English can make them to believe that they can never be successful that is to accept failure. Thus, developing positive attitude towards learning language and language teacher deems necessary. Kariminia and Salehizadeh (2007) believed that special attention have to be paid to the relationship among teachers and learners' attitude towards each other and their achievement in learning English in contexts where language learning happens mainly in formal classroom settings, and teachers are the main source of language input to students that directly influence students' learning.

Student's attitude is not separate from learning; therefore, it should be the crucial part of foreign language learning. Based on Schibeci and Riley (1986), attitudes influence achievement, rather than achievements influencing attitudes. Therefore, both negative and positive attitudes have numerous influences on the success of language learning. Studies show that affective variables have significant influence on language success (Eveyik, 1999; Gardner, 1985; Skehan, 1989; Spolsky, 1989).

The relationship among teachers' attitude and behavior and the students' academic achievement has been endorsed by a large body of research. Bowie and Bond (1994) along with Tauber (1997) approved that teachers' negative attitude and behaviors are precisely related to students' failure in learning a language. Sarwar (2002) claimed that high academic achievers have better study habits and more positive study attitudes than low academic achievers.

There are different hypotheses about attitudes and achievement. In this study, we can describe attitude in terms of learners' attitude, teachers' attitude, and also learners' achievement in learning process. Stipek (2002) investigated that those students who perceived a more nurturing relationship with teachers tended to have better attitude towards academia and often did better than their peers who lacked the same support system. Furthermore, Marzano & Kendall (2008) argued, "the quality of teacher-student relationship is the keystone for all other aspects of classroom management". However, it is the teacher who plays the greatest role in setting the atmosphere (Whitaker, 2004).

This study seeks to discover the relationship among attitudes of English language students and teachers towards each other and students' achievement at public female high schools of Rasht. Four Null Hypothesis is proposed to take the helm of the present study that are: 1) H0: There is no significant systematic relationship between teacher's attitude towards students and students' attitude towards their teacher, 2) H0: There is no significant systematic relationship between students' attitude and the age of students, 3) H0: There is no significant relationship between students' attitude towards teachers and their achievement, 4) H0: There is no significant relationship between attitude of teachers and students' academic achievement.

II. MATERIAL

Six high schools of Rasht, from first to third grade participated in this study. The sample consisted of the high school students in their first (37.3 %), second (41.5%) and third (21.2%) year of school. They were fourteen to nineteen years old. These four hundred female participants were randomly selected from 9970 Rasht female high school students. Thirty-five students did not fill the questionnaire completely, thus were excluded. Thirty students who took part in the pilot study did not take part in the actual study. A total number of three-hundred and thirty five female students participated in this research hence. On the other side, ten female teachers practicing the selected English classes were included as well. Their background of teaching was between eighteen to twenty years teaching at different grades of school year.

III. INSTRUMENTATION

In this study, the data were collected from three sources: first, the student questionnaire which was administered by the researcher in the absence of their English teacher. Second, the teacher questionnaire which was completed outside the classroom by each respective participant English teacher, exactly at the same time the participant students were busy completing their questionnaires. Third, the students were evaluated by their achievement that is outlined in detail.

The researcher utilized a *student questionnaire* based on AMTB questionnaire. The student questionnaire consisted of the demographic information including students' age, years of study and background (whether received parents, private or institute instruction) and thirty items included students' attitudes towards their English teacher. The student questionnaire was distributed among the first, second and third grades at public female high schools of Guilan province in Iran. The questions were answered on a four-point Likert scale from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree". The questionnaire was translated into Persian for clear understanding of the items. Also a *teacher questionnaire* was distributed among ten teachers including nine items on teachers' attitudes towards their students in terms of students' English skill abilities. The questions were answered on a four-point scale (poor, average, good and very good). Teacher questionnaire was distributed among ten participant teachers. Drawn upon the data, teachers' work experience reached from eighteen to twenty, and all of them had taught in different grades of school year. By the same token, Students were assessed through *achievement test* that are the students' final exam scores, their class activities and their midterm marks. No standard test was utilized as the evaluation system differs to a very large extent in Iran.

IV. DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURES

A. The Pilot Study

The student questionnaire was translated to Persian and piloted to make sure that the items were valid and reliable. Right after piloting the questionnaire to check for the reliability and validity (the Cronbach's Alfa of .954 for 30 items), it was finalized for the large-scale data collection. The thirty piloted students did not take part in the actual study. The data were then collected from high school students in the female high schools in Rasht during school year in 2013-2014.

B. Design of the Study

This study is descriptive in nature, and the groups were randomly chosen. Descriptive statistics were used to determine the frequency, means, and percentages. T-test and Pearson test were conducted to determine the correlation between the students' successes and their attitudes towards their teacher. The dependent, independent and control variables here are respectively students' English achievement, their age, and attitudes of teachers and students. The teacher questionnaire included twelve items while the student questionnaire was divided into two sections: biographical

information and a thirty-item attitude questions. In the term of students' English background knowledge, 23% of the students attended the private classes, institute classes, or received parental instruction. Total of 77% students had no English background knowledge, 18.6% of the students had one to four and 4.5% five to nine years of English background knowledge. In terms of teachers' teaching experience, teachers had about 30% eighteen, 40% nineteen, and 30% twenty years of teaching experience.

Descriptive analysis indicated that about 11.4% of the teachers hold negative attitudes towards their students. Thus, about 88.6 percent of teachers' responses were positive while about 78.8 percent of the students showed positive attitude towards teachers' behaviors. Furthermore, it was confirmed that about 66.4 percent of respondents supported their teachers' teaching methodology. The majority of the students (about 80.5 percent agreed and strongly agreed) were satisfied with teachers' power of classroom monitoring. An overall 74.4 percent of students agreed that their teachers encourage students to increase their learning motivation and about 66.8 percent of respondents agreed that their teachers help them to maintain independence. However, forty-two percent of respondents disagreed with their teachers' ability in using different evaluation techniques.

To test the first research hypothesis which targeted the relationship between teachers' attitude towards students as well as students' attitude towards their teachers, Pearson's Correlation (Table 1) is implemented after checking for normality which showed there is a moderate correlation between two variables ($p < 0/000$ and $r = 0/202$, $N = 313$).

TABLE 1.
STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS TEACHERS & TEACHERS' ATTITUDES TOWARD STUDENTS

		Teacher attitude	Student attitude
Teacher attitude	Pearson Correlation	1	.202(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	335	335
Student attitude	Pearson Correlation	.202(**)	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	335	335

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

Table 1 shows that significant value is smaller than 0.05, therefore the relationship is positive. The value of intensity is 0.202, thus the amount of intensity is medium. On the other hand, with calculating the coefficients of the two variables, we can determine the amount of shared variance between the two variables by squaring the correlation coefficient. In table 1, the value of Pearson is 0/202 ($r = 0/202$); with squaring this value, we can see that there is only 4% common variance. As a result, the teachers' attitudes explain only four percent of the variance of students' attitude. Hence, the first null hypothesis is rejected.

TABLE 2.
CORRELATION BETWEEN AGES OF STUDENTS & STUDENTS' ATTITUDES

		Age	S attitude
Age	Pearson Correlation	1	.460
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	335	335
S attitude	Pearson Correlation	.460	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	335	335

In table 2, the Pearson correlation ($p < 0/000$ and $r = 0/460$, $n = 335$) found the correlation between two variables significant; the correlation coefficient is medium and positive. Thus, the older students show positive attitudes towards their teachers. This finding is in line with Erdogan, et al. (2008).

The third research hypothesis seek the relationship between students' attitude and students' achievement divided here into two groups of achievements with final scores above 10 ($N = 225$) and below 10 ($N = 110$). The relationship between two variables for the former and the latter groups were both statistically significant ($\text{sig} = 0/013$, $r = 0/0345$; $\text{sig} = 0.016$, $r = 0.229$). Thus, there is a high positive relation between students' attitudes and their achievements so that the hypothesis is rejected.

TABLE 3.
TEACHERS' ATTITUDES & STUDENTS' ACHIEVEMENT, WITH OBTAINED SCORES ABOVE 10

		Final exam	Teacher
Final exam	Pearson Correlation	1	.560(**)
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	225	10
t. attitude	Pearson Correlation	.560(**)	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	10	10

* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

The fourth research hypothesis assessed the relationship between the teachers' attitudes towards the students and their achievement. As it is shown in Table 3, the attitudes of teachers towards the students' success and failures are statistically significant ($\text{sig}=0.000$). Drawn upon the finding, the final null hypothesis is rejected and alternative hypothesis that emphasized the relationship between the two variables is approved.

TABLE 4.
PAIRED SAMPLES STATISTICS

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	First exam	12.6624	335	4.45696	.24387
	Final exam	14.4559	335	4.42324	.24203

TABLE 5.
PAIRED SAMPLES TEST

	Paired Differences					T	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Upper	Lower			
First Exam Final exam	1.79100	2.07336	.11345	.98341	1.42974	10.635	335	.000

Paired sample T-test was used to investigate the differences between two scores obtained from the pre-test (first test at the beginning of the academic year as background knowledge) and post-test (average of students' final exam scores, their class activities and their midterm scores). As we can see in table 4, 12.66 and 14.45 are the mean of students' scores which has been enhanced in the pre-test and the post-test. Since the test is statically significant ($\text{sig. (2-tailed): .000}$) and the difference between two scores is 1.79, we concluded that teacher's procedures increased students' attitude towards their teachers after the first test. Null hypothesis that emphasize no differences between two scores is rejected. Criteria for students' achievement were by comparing the first exam as background knowledge at the first semester with the data was collected at the end of the final semester (average of students' final exam scores, their class activities and their midterm scores).

V. RESULTS OF HYPOTHESES TESTING

In the female high school of Rasht in Iran, there is a significant relationship between attitude and achievement. They do assist in shedding light to other variables that could influence students' achievement levels. It is important to say that students with the positive attitudes are more successful than with the negative ones. In term of students' age, older students show more respect and positive attitudes towards their teacher.

VI. DISCUSSION

Williams et al. (2002) asserted that learners' perceptions and interpretations had been found to have the greatest influence on achievement and claimed that, in some cases, students' perceptions of teacher behaviors might not correspond with their teachers' intentions. A major trend in language syllabus design has been the use of information from learners on curriculum decision-making (Nunan, 1993). Students should be active in their learning context, not only passive assemblers of information. Learning is a product of learners' own actions and is based not only on the learners' previous skills and knowledge but also on their experience and interest. De Corte (1993) proposed that "if learners have a role in defining and choosing the goals, the course content, and the methodology, learning will be more relevant to them." Attitudes are not very stable and sometimes, negative attitudes are substituted by positive ones and vice versa. Thus, there is not one-way relation from the learner to others but there is much scope of interrelationship between the attitudes and success or failure in the second language learning. Researchers often tend to overlook teachers as a potential source of problems in the classroom (Kearney, et al., 1991). Furthermore, policy makers often focus on curriculum and curricula aspects; they neglect the importance of teacher-student interaction. Kearney et al. (1991) considered teacher's misbehaviors as interfering factor on students' learning.

A number of pedagogical implications can be put forward here. First, Teachers are to consider the proper instructional resources for their educational material, in order to create an interesting class. They are required to be aware of their students' needs beyond the academic instruction. Kormos and Csizer (2008) claimed that teacher, materials, and class activities are instrumental in shaping attitudes to learning. Second, teachers need to outline the plan for succeeding their students in learning English. Ataei (2000) emphasized the importance of conducting a detailed and systematic needs analysis. Teachers can provide instructional and problem-solving strategies to prevent students from failure. Students' language learning procedures should be conducted on the basis of their field of study. Third, there is a necessity for reduction of the negative attitude which related to the students' achievement in learning language. Mantle-Bromley (1995) also stated that if the students' attitudes towards learning a foreign language influence their attempts, teachers should be knowledgeable about issues that related to attitudes. Findings of Bromley's study showed that teachers can change the attitudes of the students with negative attitudes towards the target language culture.

VII. CONCLUSION

This study focused on the correlation among students' attitudes towards their teachers, teachers' attitudes towards their students and students' achievement in learning English language. The findings of this study enlightened Female high school students of Rasht show positive dyadic attitudes towards English teachers if their teachers show positive attitudes towards them. This provided adequate answers to the research questions contradicting the idea that there is no relationship between attitudes and English language learners' achievement (Lunara, 1999) or there is a weak relationship between learners' positive attitudes and students' achievement (karas,1997). The findings were also in line with Saracaloğlu, (1996).

It is shown that only a few percent of the participants showed negative attitudes towards their English teachers and there was a significant correlation between students' grades and attitudes. There might be other reasons for the students to become successful, such as instructional methods and the subject materials used.

The research supports this notion that teachers are the main source of language input to the students; influence their learning directly (Kariminia & Salehizadeh, 2007). Also, teachers have a vital role in provoking their learners' academic achievement and their quality can highly influence students' outcome (Campbell, et al., 2004). Teachers can provide a non-threatening environment for learning and make students think positively about the teacher and the educational materials. Teachers' emotional factors such as kindness and caring have an impact on the students' attitudes towards learning language.

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