



A Descriptive Study of EFL Learners' Attitude towards the English Language at the Secondary School Level



Muhammad Qasim Ali

Assistant Professor, Department of Education, Institute of Southern Punjab, Multan, Punjab, Pakistan.

Sana Alvi

Lecturer, Department of English, Government Graduate College for Women, Chowk Azam, Layyah, Punjab, Pakistan.

Ramsha Nazar

Lecturer, Department of Education, Government Graduate College for Women, Chowk Azam, Layyah, Punjab, Pakistan.

Abstract: *The study highlighted EFL learners' attitudes toward the English language at the secondary school level. The study's main goals were to compare Urdu EFL secondary school students' attitudes and learning approaches toward English in public and private schools. It was a descriptive study. All public and private secondary school pupils were studied. The study employed a standardized questionnaire. Studies employed the above questionnaire, which was reliable. Samples were surveyed. The most common statistical methods—mean score, standard deviation, and t-test—were employed to examine the data. The study found that private secondary school students are more interested in learning and speaking English than public secondary school students—private secondary school students like English. Encourage and motivate pupils to have a positive attitude toward learning English to reduce their hesitation to speak and write English. Language-centred teaching and classroom involvement can improve English speaking and writing. Confidence boosts English learning.*

Key Words: English Language, EFL Learners, Secondary School

Corresponding Author: Muhammad Qasim Ali (Assistant Professor, Department of Education, Institute of Southern Punjab, Multan, Punjab, Pakistan. Email: qasimvr@yahoo.com)

Introduction

The success of teachers of English to speakers of other languages depends on their ability to tap into their students' motivations and feelings for the language. Students' dispositions significantly impact their interest, effort, and eventual success in learning a new language. The perspectives of secondary-school-aged English language learners (EFL) on the English language are introduced in this paper. Individuals'

attitudes toward the English language are multifaceted, encompassing their beliefs, values, and actions concerning the language. Attitudes about English among EFL learners can range from positive to negative depending on several factors, including cultural background, individual experiences, societal pressures, and educational contexts (Phuong, Tran, & Le, 2023). Various variables, including upbringing, education, exposure to other languages, interactions with peers, and general social perceptions, can shape a

person's perspective on the English language. Learners' motivation, expectations, and openness to engaging with the language can be gleaned from their attitudes (Pun, & Onder-Ozdemir, 2023). Educators can do more to foster a good and helpful learning environment by first recognizing any underlying negative attitudes or impediments.

A person's value increases due to their mastery of language, which is a phenomenon exclusive to humans. Everyone should try to educate themselves in at least one more language as it is inherent to human nature. With Allah's permission, the capacity for speech and verbal communication is the primary perceptual ability that sets humanity apart from other species in the universe. Each individual will share their thoughts, emotions, and evaluations with the other participants during a conversation.

Students in Pakistan are required to study the English language, making it their second language after Urdu. In Pakistan, students need to acquire English language skills. Despite everyone's best efforts, students' English learning still has room for improvement (Ali et al., 2023). The process of learning a second language is influenced by a wide variety of factors, including but not limited to attitudes, age, level of proficiency, learning success, learning style, and level of motivation.

Researchers pay attention to the "attitude of learning the English language," even though a variety of factors contribute to the poor level of English education in Pakistan. According to Alkaff (2013), a student's attitude toward learning any language might influence their excitement for studying the language being targeted. How one approaches anything has a significant impact on the outcomes. Students that go into the process of learning English with a constructive mindset will be able to study more effectively and will have little to no problem doing so. Learning anything

depends on attention, commitment, and effort invested. Learning a language is also extremely important for enabling humans to communicate their thoughts and ideas with one another.

The prospective students of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) have on the English language is essential to consider if one is interested in comprehending how they acquire a language. The attitudes of language learners have a considerable impact on their level of motivation, engagement, and overall success in the process of acquiring a second language. At the secondary school level, students learning English as a foreign language are in a crucial period of language development. It is the phase of language development in which students' beliefs and attitudes toward English can influence the outcomes of their language acquisition.

This research analyzes EFL students learning English in secondary schools perspectives on the English language. In order to gain insight into their opinions, preferences, and feelings regarding English as a foreign language, we will conduct an attitude survey with them. Educators and policymakers can benefit from a better understanding of these attitudes because they can customize practical approaches to language learning, curriculum design, and instructional tactics to enhance students' language learning experiences. The objective of the study was to make a comparison between EFL public and private secondary school students' attitudes toward the English language.

Literature Review

At the secondary school level, it is essential to research the attitudes of English language learners toward the English language. Learners' attitudes can significantly impact their desire to study English. A positive attitude toward the target language can increase a learner's motivation to participate

in activities designed to help them acquire the language and their willingness to put in the effort and remain committed to the process. On the other hand, pessimistic outlooks might cause disengagement and slow down growth.

Second, educators may better fulfil their students' needs by better meeting their students' attitudes if they understand their students' attitudes. By acknowledging the students' positive or negative attitudes about the English language, teachers can establish a learning environment that is friendly and inclusive, which in turn supports positive experiences in language learning.

Learning, as defined by Tavil (2009), is "the gradual alteration of one's behaviour, attitude, knowledge, aptitude, and routines as a result of one's experience with the world" (p. For pupils, language is the most specific aspect of any learning process. It has been shown that language acquisition is facilitated by exposure to the mother tongue.

In her research, Oliveira (1997) finds that male and female students exhibit distinctly different patterns of pro- and anti-social conduct and outlook. According to her, female students are more enthusiastic about learning English. However, boys do not take language learning seriously. The same may be said about picking up a second language in Pakistan. Boys have an easier time learning English but spend time playing video games and watching TV.

Hashwani (2008) claims that female elementary school students are more likely to have a positive outlook on school, pay close attention in class, and pick up new information than their male counterparts. The way a male and female student thinks about learning is different. Higher union status is required for girls learning English as a second language. According to Hashwani (2008), ladies' enthusiasm is more valuable than boys' attitude to extreme anxiety. Compared to boys, girls show a higher level

of consistency when learning a new language.

Girls say Shoaib and Dornyei (2005), are more enthusiastic about acquiring new linguistic material and have a more positive outlook on education in general than boys. Kids with a good outlook are more motivated to study the language. As a result, acquiring fluency in English calls for a confident demeanour fueled by inspiration and unwavering commitment.

A person's attitude can be deduced from how others see them based on their actions and feelings. Looking at things, feeling in specific ways, and making certain gestures are all examples of attitude. Attitude is a person's general disposition regarding emotions, actions, behaviours, and environmental context.

According to Gajalakshmi (2013), optimistic and pessimistic perspectives are equally important. A negative newbie needs to pay extra attention to several crucial language components because they are less interested in and dedicated to learning them. An optimist approaches learning with new assumptions and intentions, has an upbeat disposition, and is more motivated to master the language than a pessimist.

Especially among the elderly, there is slight variation in outlook. According to Mehrens and Lehmann (1987), people's emotions and actions reveal their beliefs about their capabilities and motivations about a specific topic. An attitude is a way of thinking or behaving about a social issue. Students' outlooks and surroundings are profoundly influenced by the lessons they learn. The most crucial aspect of any setting is the student's outlook on language acquisition, which may be optimistic or pessimistic.

Bot, Lowie, and Verspoor (2005) state that a cheerful outlook helps pupils learn. Oliveira (1997) agrees that learners can acquire a second language more quickly and easily in a natural setting if their elders guide

them. As defined by Abidin, Mohammadi, and Alzwari (2012), attitude is comprised of one's thoughts and responses to adversity. That will likely have beneficial effects but may also cause harm. To acquire knowledge, one must give complete focus and energy to the task at hand.

On the other hand, if someone is not enthusiastic about anything, it is a bad sign that they have a negative outlook on it. This data demonstrates that the optimistic method considerably affects pupils' mastery of various prerequisite subjects. How a person behaves, thinks, or feels determines their attitude. Students must be inspired and motivated to try new things; thus, an optimistic outlook is crucial.

An individual's sense of self-worth, belief, encouragement, and discouragement all have a role in shaping their attitude, as stated by Soleimani (2013). The English language elicits both harmful and good responses from students. According to Oliveira (1997), girls have more time to study and memorize since they are more easily accessible at home. They need to chill out more in class and set ambitious goals for their future. Males, on the other hand, are disinterested in school. Gajalakshmi (2013) argues that three facets of education contribute to a person's mentality. Both involve mental and physical processes. Therefore, a positive mindset is essential for each learner.

A second or foreign language learner's success depends on more than their aptitude for the language itself. That is why it is essential to view learning a new language as more of a mental or civic exercise than a purely academic one. Padwick (2010) argues that the emotional and community aspects of language learning are just as important as the logical perceptual aspects. The student's success in acquiring the desired language depends mainly on the student's motivation and attitude. Gardener (1999) explains that students' attitudes and awareness toward the

target language significantly determine how well they learn the target language.

Research Methodology

The quantitative investigation was descriptive. Descriptive research involves factual and complete knowledge of current events, according to Ezeani (1998). The survey included all Pakpattan District students in classes 9 and 10 from public and private secondary schools. The researchers randomly selected four hundred forty-four secondary school students—222 public and 222 private. The questionnaire that Gardener (2004) prepared addressing the attitudes of English learners was modified so that the researchers could use it. The questionnaire was rigorously tested and found to have excellent reliability; it contained 13 items that had been moderately altered.

The questionnaire discussed earlier has been well validated, has a very high level of reliability, and has been utilized frequently in research on English language instruction. The researcher obtained the supervisor's permission before modifying the questionnaire to suit the requirements and skill levels of the students. The questionnaire had 13 items.

Mawoli and Babandako (2011) state that collecting only the most essential data is best suited for descriptive research. The researcher went to each of these schools in person to hand out the questionnaire she had created, gather the information she needed, and then get the data from the students who had volunteered to participate in the study. Responding to the questionnaire was divided into parts and outlined in more detail. The investigator went to a model school to collect data, and before doing so, he or she asked for and received permission from the school's headmaster, principal, or headmistress.

The researcher who conducted the study collected the data by hand. During the researcher's visit to the school, the researcher

will receive all of the information that was filled out on the feedback form simultaneously. It is encouraging to see the teachers working together like this. The students had enough time to complete the questionnaire. The researcher's visits yielded robust data.

The research procedure ends with data analysis and a conclusion. As mentioned, the instruments' data was evaluated, collated, and interpreted in light of the study's objectives. In order to calculate the mean score, standard deviation, and t-test, SPSS version 21 (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) provided the most excellent mathematical tool.

Data Interpretation

An analysis is as under:

Table 1

Respondents Responses

Item No.	Mean_Score		Standard Deviation	
	Public	Private	Public	Private
1.	3.47	3.19	1.28	1.53
2	3.12	3.48	1.13	1.18
3	3.15	2.94	1.25	1.16
4	3.57	3.92	1.14	1.08
5	3.84	3.98	1.28	1.54
6	3.64	3.81	1.19	1.34
7	3.51	3.69	1.21	1.38
8	3.93	4.15	1.13	1.19
9	3.60	4.07	1.17	1.14
10	3.68	3.94	1.25	1.38
11	3.84	3.76	1.11	1.19
12	3.01	3.54	1.16	1.09
13	3.51	3.72	1.07	1.22

Compared to their private school counterparts, students in public secondary institutions have a higher average score (3.47, SD 1.28) on the statement "I am pretty good as an English language learner." A private secondary school student, on the other hand, averages 3.19 with a standard deviation of 1.53.

Item 2 data shows that public secondary school students report lower levels of fear than their private school counterparts, with a mean score of 3.12 and a standard deviation of 1.13, respectively, compared to a mean score of 3.48 and a standard deviation of 1.18 for private school students.

Students in public secondary schools scored a mean of 3.15 on item 3, "I feel hesitant to speak English frequently," with a standard deviation of 1.25. On the other hand, private secondary school students averaged 2.94 and varied by 1.16 on the test. This data suggests that secondary school pupils in public institutions are more hesitant than those in private institutions.

The difference between the mean score and the standard deviation of students at public and private secondary schools in Item 4 demonstrates that students at private secondary schools are more irritated when people do not provide them with clear-cut answers than students at public secondary schools.

Item 5 asserts, "I like to learn the English Language." When compared to the mean score of 3.98 and the standard deviation of 1.54 for students attending private secondary schools, the mean score of 3.84 for students attending public secondary schools and the standard deviation of 1.28 for students attending public secondary schools both indicate that students attending private secondary schools are more motivated to learn English than students attending public secondary schools.

Item 6 demonstrates that students who attend private secondary schools demonstrate a greater interest in learning English than students who attend public secondary schools by comparing the mean score and standard deviation of students who attend public secondary schools (3.64 and 1.19) to the mean score and standard deviation of students who attend private secondary schools (3.81 and 1.34). It shows

that students who attend private secondary schools demonstrate a greater interest in learning English than students who attend public secondary schools.

Those attending secondary schools in the public sector received an average grade of 3.51, with a standard deviation of 1.21; those attending secondary schools in the private sector received an average grade of 3.69, with a standard deviation of 1.38. Students in secondary schools, both public and private, have a great desire to master many parts of the English language. This desire is almost as strong as it is. The fact that there are only slight differences between the secondary education results obtained from public and private institutions supports this theory.

As seen in item 9, there is a significant gap between the mean score and standard deviation of public secondary school students (3.60 and 1.17) and those attending private secondary schools (4.07 and 1.14). This gap indicates that students attending private secondary schools have a greater desire to speak good English than students attending public secondary schools.

Item 10 revealed that the mean score and standard deviation for public secondary school students were 3.68 and 1.25, respectively. In contrast, the mean score and standard deviation for private secondary school students were 3.94 and 1.38, respectively. Students who attend secondary schools in private institutions have a stronger conviction than students who attend secondary schools in public institutions that proficiency in English is necessary for employment in any organization.

Item 11 says, "I feel good about learning English." Because the mean score and standard deviation of students attending public secondary schools were 3.84 and 1.11, respectively, and the mean score and standard deviation of students attending private secondary schools were 3.76 and 1.19, respectively, the results demonstrate that

students attending public secondary schools and students attending private secondary schools both have a positive attitude towards the process of learning the English language because there is a correlation between the two groups' mean scores and standard deviations.

Item 12's results suggest, "I get nervous when speaking English." Public secondary school students had a mean score of 3.01 and a standard deviation of 1.16. Private secondary school students had a mean score of 3.72 and a standard deviation of 1.22. It suggests that private secondary school students were more likely to experience anxiety when speaking English.

As demonstrated in point 13, learning English calls for a significant time commitment on the learner's part. Public secondary school students achieved an average grade of 3.51, with a standard deviation of 1.07. On the other hand, the kids who attended private secondary schools had a mean score of 3.72 and a standard deviation of 1.22. According to the findings, students who are enrolled in secondary public schools and those who are enrolled in secondary private schools are of the same opinion on the necessity of devoting a sizeable amount of time to learning English.

Results and Discussion

This study aimed to investigate the viewpoints of speakers learning English as a foreign language (EFL) among secondary school students attending public and private schools. According to the findings of research carried out by Ali et al. (2015), native speakers of Urdu who have an interest in learning English as a foreign language do so because they believe it to be the language that great nations and successful individuals speak. The findings of this study suggest that students attending public secondary schools have a firm grasp of the English language. On the other hand, they are reticent to speak

English, unlike pupils attending private secondary schools, who are terrified of the ridicule they will receive if they make a mistake in their speech. According to Ali, Shehzad, and Riaz's (2015) research, secondary school pupils do not have a lower level of anxiety over learning and speaking English. It is more likely that students attending private secondary schools will learn English and be interested in the language than those attending public secondary schools. Comparing the outcomes of public and private secondary school students reveals that both types strongly desire to become proficient in all facets of the English language, including hearing, speaking, and grammar. The findings of the study indicate that students who attend secondary private schools have a stronger preference than students who attend secondary public schools for learning English since the language is a primary requirement of society. This preference was shown to be stronger than students who attended secondary public schools. Students who attended private secondary schools had a more favourable assessment of their ability to

speak English in comparison to those who attended public secondary schools during their secondary education. The researchers came to the conclusion that pupils in both public and private secondary schools have good views towards obtaining English language skills. This was possible due to the fact that there was very little difference in the responses. Students in both public and private secondary schools believe that it takes a large amount of time and effort to become proficient in the use of the English language, as indicated by the findings of the research.

Recommendations

It is highly advised that students in public secondary schools improve their communication abilities using up-to-date teaching materials and techniques. Teachers' ability to encourage student engagement in various classroom activities may also be advised to enhance students' English language skills. Instilling a sense of self-assurance in Urdu speakers studying English as a foreign language may help them progress.

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