

An analytical pedagogical assessment of the Egyptian and Saudi EFL learners' attitudes towards learning English

Dr. Sahr Abdel Hameed Shishan

Sheraton Higher Institute

Department of Languages & Translation

Abstract

One of the vexing issues that has dominated the field of foreign language (FL) pedagogy is the types of FL learners' attitudes towards learning the target language. Therefore, the current study examined the different types of attitudes which Egyptian and Saudi EFL have when learning English. The sample of sixty participants took part in the current study. They were divided into two groups: group A includes 30 Egyptian EFL learners while group B comprises their 30 Saudi counterparts. Data were collected through a 28-item questionnaire of attitudes towards foreign language learning. Data were analyzed using descriptive statistics of frequency of the participants' responses. One way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted to determine the statistically significant differences between the attitudes of both groups towards learning English. The present study introduced implications for the TEFL process.

Keywords: *Egyptian EFL learners, Saudi EFL learners, attitudes, pedagogy, FL implications*

Introduction

Benson and Voller (2014) explained that students' attitudes are integrated with their learning of a foreign language (FL). Hence, attitudes are essential components of FL pedagogy. Indeed, attitudes have influence on learners' behaviour in selecting, reading learning materials, and developing their language skills. According to Bobkina and Fernandez de (2012) it is commonly believed that when learners have positive attitudes towards a subject, they are expected to successfully learn it. There is an interaction between the learning environment in which

learners are gathered and language learning. Both types of attitudes, whether positive or negative, have an impact on the successful learning of a FL. McAuley, Leskovec, and Jurafsky (2012) pointed out that attitude is depicted as behavioural beliefs and determined by learners' beliefs about the outcomes resulting from performing a specific behaviour. When learners believe that valuable outcome can result from learning English, they are considered as having positive attitudes towards learning English. On the contrary, when learners believe that negative outcomes will result from learning English, then, they are classified as having negative attitudes towards learning English. Rahimi and Yadollahi (2011) clarified that there are three components of attitude, namely behavioural, affective and cognitive. The first component is related to learners' behaviour and reaction in a particular situation, i.e. learning English. The success of language learning depends on learners' ability to identify themselves as part of the native speakers' community. In other words, learners need to adopt different behavioural aspects of the native speakers' community. The second component is related to the influence of learners' feelings and emotion towards the target language. These emotional aspects of attitude result from the mutual interaction between teachers and students. Attitude helps learners determine whether they like or dislike the subject being taught. The third component is related to learners' beliefs about the receive language knowledge and the extent of understanding that knowledge. Attitude is cognitive in the sense of relating the acquired knowledge to the old existed knowledge in order to create, check and apply the created knowledge in different situations. The English language has widely spread and used as an international language all over the world. In Egypt and Saudi Arabia, English is classified as a foreign language and is being taught as a compulsory subject at

schools. However, the English proficiency level of Egyptian and Saudi undergraduates is still unsatisfactory. Therefore, it was necessary to examine how some Egyptian and Saudi EFL learners view and perceive the process of learning English.

Statement of the problem

Due to the importance of attitude in the process of FL teaching and learning, the present study examined the different types of attitudes which Egyptian and Saudi EFL have when learning English. It examined the feelings, views and perceptions of Egyptian and Saudi EFL learners when learning English.

Questions

The present study attempted to answer the following questions:

1. How do the Egyptian EFL learners view the process of learning English as a FL?
2. What are the types of the Saudi EFL learners' attitudes towards learning English?
3. Is there a statistically significant difference between the attitudes of both Egyptian and Saudi EFL towards learning English?

Aims

The present study aimed to:

1. State the types of the Egyptian EFL learners' attitudes towards learning English.
2. Determine the types of attitudes which the Saudi EFL learners have when learning English.
3. Verify the statistical significant difference between the Egyptian and Saudi EFL learners' attitudes towards learning English.

Significance of the Study

Significance of the present study stems from the fact that its findings provide a clear image to the education planners in Egypt and Saudi Arabia about the attitudes of their students towards learning English. This will help curriculum planners in both countries to develop suitable learning materials that cater for the needs of their learners who have positive and negative types of attitudes towards learning English. The findings will also help FL teachers in both countries to select suitable teaching methods that suit their learners' different types of attitudes. The findings will guide Egyptian and Saudi FL teachers to amend their teaching strategies in a way that provides more encouragement and motivation to their learners for learning English. The findings have particular significance to the higher learning institutions to which the participants are affiliated. That is, the findings will help FL instructors at both institutions devise appropriate curricula that sustain the students' learning of English, develop their language skills and improve their academic achievements.

Delimitation

The findings of the present study are limited to both institutions to which the participants are affiliated. However, the findings could be also useful for other higher learning institutions in Egypt and Saudi Arabia.

Literature Review

Santana, Garcia-Santillan, Ferrer-Nieto, and Lopes-Martinez (2017) discussed the attitudes of 96 postgraduate students towards learning English as a second language. The participants were enrolled at the Cristobal Colon University in Mexico. Data were collected through a

psychometric Likert scale to measure the participants' attitudes towards learning English in terms of six components. These components are self-confidence, motivation, commitment, importance of the English language, feeling of integration with the English language community, and needs for learning English. Validation of the attitude scale was based on the verification of the scale reliability by using the Cronbach's alpha coefficient. In addition, the factor analysis of multivariate technique was used by extracting the main components as a procedure to analyze the data. The hypotheses were tested by using Bartlett's test of Sphericity, KMO test (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin). Santana, et al. (2017) found that the Cronbach's alpha of the thirty three-item scale was .75 which indicates the internal consistency of the scale. Santana, et al. (2017) found that the most significant contributor to the participants' attitudes towards learning English was motivation, whereas the participants' self-confidence did not significantly contribute to develop their learning of English.

Meral (2019) examined the relationship between 355 high school Turkish students' attitudes towards learning, their internet addictions and their academic achievements. The participants were grades 10 and 11 students enrolled at public high schools in Istanbul. Data were elicited through two instruments: a learning attitude questionnaire and an internet addiction questionnaire. Inferential statistics, including T-Test, one way analysis of variance (ANOVA) and correlation, was used to analyze the elicited data. Meral (2019) found that the participants' internet addictions differed in terms of the participants' academic

achievements, gender, homework habits and family activity. Meanwhile, the participants' internet addiction was negatively correlated to their attitudes towards learning. Meral (2019) concluded that the variance of students' learning attitudes could sustain the use of information technology both effectively and efficiently.

Bin-Hady and Hazaea (2020) examined the correlation between Yemeni EFL students' attitudes towards FL flipped pronunciation classrooms and their FL achievement. The participants were 40 English-majoring Yemeni students enrolled at the Department of English, College of Education, Hadhramout University. The study adopted a mixed method of quantitative and qualitative analysis. Data were collected through three instruments, namely FL pronunciation test, questionnaire, and structured interview. Data were analyzed by using the one-sample T-Test. Bin-Hady and Hazaea (2020) found that the participants' performance in FL pronunciation was improved due to the use of the flipped pronunciation classrooms. Bin-Hady and Hazaea (2020) reported high level positive correlation between the participants' achievement and their attitudes towards flipped pronunciation classrooms. The participants positively perceived the sharing of selected videos and audio because it allowed them to practice FL pronunciation at home several times. The participants also acquired the recorded pronunciation produced by English native speakers and were able to participate confidently in the FL classes due to developing their pronunciation skills. Bin-Hady and Hazaea (2020) recommended the use of flipped learning as a mean of improving FL pronunciation among EFL students.

Getie (2020) investigated the factors which affect the attitudes of 103 grade 10 Ethiopian EFL students towards learning English. Data were collected through three instruments: five-scale Likert questionnaire, semi-structured interview and group discussion. The questionnaire was distributed to the 103 students while the interview was restricted to the English language teachers. Meanwhile, only nine students of different English language proficiency levels were participated in the group discussion. The participants' native language (i.e. the Amharic language) was the medium of data collection in the three instruments. Getie (2020) adopted mixed method of quantitative and qualitative analysis for the purpose of data collection. Whereas questionnaire was quantitatively analyzed by using frequency and percentage scores, the interview and group discussion were qualitatively analyzed since they contained open-ended questions. Getie (2020) found that the 103 high school participants had mainly positive attitudes towards learning English. The participants' attitudes towards learning were positively affected by their social variables such as parents' motivation, peer group, and native speakers of English). On the other hand, the participants' attitudes towards learning English were negatively affected by the factors of educational context. These factors include learning environment, arrangement of seats, Ethiopian teachers of English, and the classrooms. Therefore, Getie (2020) recommended that the Ethiopian government should cooperate with the school principals and teachers to improve the physical learning environment.

Ahmed, Othman, Gardi, Sabir, Ismael, Hamza, Sorguli, Aziz, Ali, Anwar (2021) examined the attitude of Kurdish

students of Iraq towards learning English. Data were collected through a questionnaire which was divided into two sections. Data were collected from 214 freshmen and sophomore students who enrolled at the Department of English in a private university in Kurdistan. The first section focused on the participants' demographic variables such as age, gender, and years of studying English. Meanwhile, the second section contained 26 questions about the participants' attitudes towards learning English. Inferential statistics was used to analyze the data including correlation and linear regression. Ahmed et al. (2021) found that the Kurdish Iraqi students have negative attitudes towards learning English because they were not motivated or encouraged to learn English. The students had the perception that they are forced to learn English. Thus, they became reluctant to learn English and develop their language skills. Ahmed et al. (2021) emphasized the role of gender and duration of studying English as statistically significant contributors to the Kurdish Iraqi students' attitudes towards learning English. In terms of linear relationship, there was strong correlation among the three aspects of attitude: cognitive, behavioural and emotional.

Method

The current study is based on the mixed method of quantitative and qualitative analysis (Cresswell, 2012; Oxford, 2016; Ahmed et al, 2021; and Marghany, 2022). Quantitatively, the frequencies of the participants' responses to the positive and negative questionnaire items were computed. One way analysis of variance (ANOVA) was employed to test the null hypothesis that both Egyptian and Saudi EFL learners' attitudes towards learning English are similar. As for qualitative approach, the attitude responses of both groups of participants were analyzed.

Participants

There were two groups of participants. The first group included 30 Egyptian EFL learners enrolled at the Department of English, Sheraton Language Institute, Egypt. Meanwhile, the second group comprised 30 Saudi EFL learners enrolled at Al-Mojtamea College, Thebes University, KSA.

Procedure

Data were collected from the Egyptian participants in the second term of the academic year 2019-2020, whereas data collection from the Saudi participants occurred in the first term of the academic year 2020-2021. Both groups were given a session lasted for one hour to respond to the questionnaire. A pilot study was conducted twice. Each time, 15 Egyptian and 15 Saudi learners were piloted separately. The Cronbach's alpha for the pilot study of the Egyptian participants was .89 while it was .87 for the Saudi participants.

Data Collection

Data were collected through a 28-item questionnaire of attitudes towards foreign language learning. The attitude questionnaire was developed and adapted based on Attitude/Motivation Test Battery used by Gardner (2006), Gardner and Masgoret (2003), and Bernaus and Gardner (2008). All the 28 items contain statements about both types of attitudes of FL learning: positive and negative. Thus, the questionnaire includes fourteen items of positive attitude towards learning English (1-14). It also includes fourteen items indicating the negative attitude towards learning English (15-28). The four responses to the questionnaire items were based on the Likert scale: Strongly Agree (SA)= 4, Agree A)= 3, Strongly Disagree

(SD)= 2, and Disagree (D)= 1. The scores of negative attitude statements were reversed.

Data Analysis

The total frequency of the Egyptian EFL learners' SA (138) and A (109) responses to the questionnaire positive items were higher than those of the Saudi EFL learners (135) and (84) respectively. Meanwhile the total frequency of the Egyptian EFL learners' SD (94) and D (49) responses to the same items were less than those responses of Saudi EFL learners (110) and (71) respectively. In addition, the total frequency of the Egyptian EFL learners' SA (68) and A (71) responses to the questionnaire negative items were largely less than those of the Saudi EFL learners (145) and (97) respectively. Furthermore, the total frequency of the Egyptian EFL learners' SD (182) and D (99) responses to the questionnaire negative items were largely higher than those of the Saudi EFL learners (104) and (72) respectively. That is, the Egyptian EFL learners had more positive attitudes towards learning English compared to their Saudi EFL counterparts. In other words, the Egyptian EFL learners' positive attitudes towards learning English exceeded that of their Saudi counterparts. For examples, English for the Egyptian learners is the best foreign language they prefer to learn. They wish to speak English fluently. The Egyptian learners like to have English as a compulsory subject. The finding rejects the null hypothesis that there is no difference between Egyptian and Saudi EFL learners' attitudes towards learning English. They like to watch English movies instead of other foreign languages movies. They also like to listen to English news. For the Egyptian learners, English is an important momentum for development. In

addition, the Egyptian EFL learners had higher SD and D responses compared to their Saudi counterparts. For examples, they do not study English because it is compulsory and they do not really hate to learn English. They also do not find difficult to improve their proficiency in English or they do not consider learning English as a waste of time. Furthermore, the Egyptian EFL learners like to know about the English culture and consider English as an essential element for success in their careers. The findings are compatible with those of Santana, et al. (2017), Meral (2019), Bin-Hady and Hazaea (2020), Getie (2020), and Ahmed et al. (2021).

Table 1: Frequency of the Egyptian EFL learners’ responses to attitude questionnaire

Items	SA	A	SD	D
English is the best foreign language which I prefer to learn	18	6	4	2
English should be a compulsory subject in Egypt/ the KSA	7	9	10	4
I wish to speak English fluently	16	9	3	2
I like to watch English movies instead of movies in other languages	12	10	6	2
I usually listen to the English news bulletin	8	9	8	5
English is the momentum behind national development	10	8	8	4
Actually, I like to study English	12	9	7	2
I am capable of improving my English language	13	8	6	3
I always speak English with my friends	4	6	11	9
I always make friends with the native	8	7	8	7

speakers				
At the digital age, learning English is important	12	14	3	1
I enjoy learning and speaking English	10	8	8	4
I always submit the assignments of English on time	8	6	12	4
Total frequency of positive items	138	109	94	49
I really hate to learn English	3	4	14	9
I only study English because it is compulsory	5	7	13	5
It is difficult to learn English	7	5	14	4
It is difficult to improve my English proficiency	3	2	13	12
Learning English is a waste of time	3	4	16	7
I can succeed in my career without learning English	4	5	12	9
I do not like to know about the culture of English native speakers	3	4	14	9
I am always afraid of making mistakes while speaking English	10	7	7	6
English should not be taught at all in my country	5	3	14	8
I seldom speak English	7	6	12	5
I do not often read English newspapers and magazines	4	6	12	8
I feel bored at the English classes	6	6	14	4
I do not regularly attend the English classes	3	5	13	9
I usually postpone doing the assignments of English	5	7	14	4
Total frequency of negative items	68	71	182	99

Table 2: Frequency of the Saudi EFL learners' responses to attitude questionnaire

Items	SA	A	SD	D
English is the best foreign language which I prefer to learn	12	4	10	4
English should be a compulsory subject in Egypt/ the KSA	9	5	11	5
I wish to speak English fluently	24	10	4	2
I like to watch English movies instead of movies in other languages	8	9	10	3
I usually listen to the English news bulletin	7	5	11	7
English is the momentum behind national development	10	7	6	7
Actually, I like to study English	14	7	6	3
I am capable of improving my English language	10	4	9	7
I always speak English with my friends	3	4	11	12
I always make friends with the native speakers	5	4	13	8
At the digital age, learning English is important	16	9	2	3
I enjoy learning and speaking English	10	8	8	4
I always submit the assignments of English on time	7	8	9	6
Total frequency of positive items	135	84	110	71
I really hate to learn English	3	5	10	12
I only study English because it is compulsory	11	6	9	4
It is difficult to learn English	14	9	5	2
It is difficult to improve my English proficiency	13	7	6	4
Learning English is a waste of time	4	6	9	11
I can succeed in my career without learning English	13	5	8	4
I do not like to know about the culture of English native speakers	9	7	8	6
I am always afraid of making mistakes while speaking English	11	7	7	5
English should not be taught at all in my country	5	6	9	10
I seldom speak English	14	8	6	2
I do not often read English newspapers and magazines	15	9	4	2
I feel bored at the English classes	16	9	3	2
I do not regularly attend the English classes	8	5	10	7
I usually postpone doing the assignments of English	9	8	10	3
Total frequency of negative items	145	97	104	72

The results of ANOVA are introduced in Table 3. The purpose was to examine the null hypothesis that attitude towards learning English did not differ among the Egyptian and Saudi EFL learners. Table 3 shows that both groups of participants had statistically significant differences in their attitudes towards learning English. The differences were in favour of the Egyptian EFL since the p value was < 0.05 . That is, the Egyptian EFL learners showed more positive attitudes compared to their Saudi counterparts towards learning English. This finding is compatible with those reported by Rahimi and Yadollahi (2011), McAuley, Leskovec, and Jurafsky (2012) and Benson and Voller (2014).

Table 3: ANOVA of Egyptian and Saudi learners' responses to attitude questionnaire

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	156.113	30	52.131	151.362	.000
Within Groups	16.026	30	.101		
Total	172.139	60			

Conclusion and TEFL Implications

The present study came to the conclusion that Egyptian EFL learners highly exceeded their Saudi counterparts in having positive attitudes towards learning English. This was evident as the Egyptian EFL learners had higher frequency score compared to their Saudi counterparts in the questionnaire's positive attitude items. As for the questionnaire's negative attitude items, the total frequency

of Egyptian EFL learners was largely less than that of the Saudi EFL learners. In other words, the total frequency of strongly agree and agree responses provided by the Egyptian participants to the positive attitude items highly exceed that of their Saudi counterparts.

Similarly, the total frequency of strongly disagree and disagree responses given by the Egyptian participants to the negative attitude items was largely less than that of the Saudi participants. The findings are in agreement with those reported by Santana, et al. (2017), Meral (2019), Bin-Hady and Hazaea (2020), Getie (2020), and Ahmed et al. (2021). The represent study also rejects the null hypothesis that there is no statistical significant difference between the attitudes towards learning English of both Egyptian and Saudi students. The finding is similar to those of Rahimi and Yadollahi (2011), McAuley, Leskovec, and Jurafsky (2012) and Benson and Voller (2014).

Undoubtedly, attitude is considered as an essential factor for the success of TEFL process whether in Egypt or Saudi Arabia. As such, FL instructors should work on handling the negative attitude aspects of both Egyptian and Saudi students in order to correct their misconceptions about the English culture and community. This can be done through using authentic materials for teaching different language skills to their students. This point also affirms the role of language curricula planners to devise culture-based curricula to make their students knowledgeable about the culture and social values of target language community.

In addition, it is suggested that both Egyptian and Saudi FL instructors should develop friendly based interaction with their students in order to help them develop positive

attitudes towards learning English. Egyptian and Saudi FL instructors should be also aware of the need to have positive learning environment in which learners are encouraged to learn English regardless of their errors. In other words, FL instructors should make their students understand that making errors is a natural element of language learning process. As such, students will not be afraid of making errors and will develop positive attitudes towards learning English. Egyptian and Saudi FL instructors can also further motivate their students to learn English by explaining the benefits which students may gain by improving their English proficiency. Egyptian and Saudi EFL learners should be also encouraged to read English newspapers and magazines, listen to English news and watch English movies.

Recommendations for further research

The present study recommended the following topics for future research:

1. A study can examine the Egyptian and Saudi EFL learners' different types of motivation towards learning English.
2. Another study may analyze the needs of both Egyptian and Saudi EFL learners when learning English.
3. A study can be conducted on the different learning styles which Egyptian and Saudi EFL adopt when learning English.
4. An in-depth study can be carried out to examine the perception of both Egyptian and Saudi EFL of the English culture and community.

5. A study may also examine the demographic and social factors affecting the attitudes of Egyptian and Saudi EFL learners when learning English.
6. A probable study can examine the effect of attitude on developing the communication skills of Egyptian and Saudi EFL students.

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