



## Assessing EFL Beginner College Students' Attitudes Towards Learning English

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### Abstract

Attitude is determined as a key element in learning a foreign language. It is based on your response to certain situations- whether positive or negative, favorable or not. The aim of this paper is to investigate the EFL learners' attitudes towards learning English in its three dimensions, that is, behavioural, cognitive and affective. To accomplish the aim, a close-ended questionnaire was completed by 50 first year students of the Department of English at the College of Education for Humanities. The results of this qualitative study reveal that students in general have a positive attitude towards learning English in these three dimensions. Furthermore, the findings reveal a powerful influence of attitudes on students' performance and motivation to learn English.

**Keywords:** Beginner students, English language, grammar

تقييم اتجاه الطلبة المبتدئين الدارسين للغة الانكليزية كلغة اجنبية نحو تعلم اللغة الانكليزية

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### ملخص

تُعدّ المواقف من القضايا الجوهرية في تعلّم اللغات الأجنبية. فهي تمثل طريقة تعامل الفرد مع المواقف المختلفة، سواءً أكانت إيجابية أم سلبية، إيجابية أم سلبية، وسواءً أكانت إيجابية أم سلبية. تتناول هذه الدراسة مواقف طلاب اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية تجاه تعلّم اللغة الإنجليزية. وتهدف إلى تحديد هذه المواقف من ثلاثة جوانب: السلوكية، والمعرفية، والوجدانية. وُزِع استبيان ذو إجابات محددة على 50 طالباً من طلاب السنة الأولى في قسم اللغة الإنجليزية بكلية التربية للعلوم الإنسانية. أظهرت نتائج هذه الدراسة النوعية وجود موقف إيجابي تجاه تعلّم اللغة الإنجليزية من خلال هذه الجوانب الثلاثة. كما أظهرت النتائج تأثير هذه المواقف على تحصيل الطلاب ودافعيتهم في تعلّم اللغة الإنجليزية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الطلبة المبتدئين, اللغة الانكليزية, نحو

## Chapter One

### Introduction

#### Statement of the Problem

English is well-established as a world language and is spoken as a first or secondary language in several countries. It has official status in several countries that are not the mother-tongue of its native speakers. More importantly, English is



studied in schools and colleges of nearly every country on the globe. In Indonesia, English is a foreign language at all levels of education.

There are many variables that can influence the process of foreign language learning such as motivation, attitudes, anxieties, academic achievement and aptitude, intelligence: age and personality. And of these, attitude has been regarded as the most significant factor that facilitates or impedes English learning. It is a significant factor contributing to students' performance and affects the way students learn English. Students' positive attitudes toward the learning object are one of the critical factors that influence effective subject mastery (Fakeye, 2010). Furthermore, attitudes influence learners' behavior and help to decide how much the students are able to understand English teaching. As described by Weinburgh (1998), responses to learning are based in part upon attitudes toward learning. Hence, it is necessary to understand students' attitudes of English learning which also allow teachers to choose more suitable teaching methods in the future lesson. Since attitudes are considered a key element affecting language achievement, this study aimed at studying students' attitudes towards learning English. More specifically, this study seeks to investigate attitudes along three domains; cognitive, affective and behavioral.

They predispose people to feeling or acting in a particular way towards different aspects of the world (Jabeen & Shah, 2011). Attitude was defined by Likert as a construct inferred from a whole compact of beliefs toward an attitude object. Ajzen (1988) also conceptualized attitude as a "predisposition to respond favorably or unfavorably to an object, person, institution or event."

Studies indicate that attitude is a function of people's beliefs about the outcomes or attributes of a behavior and their evaluations of these outcomes (Montano & Kasprzyk, 2008). Therefore, those who anticipate positive consequences are inclined to form positive attitudes toward a behavior, while expectations of negative consequences result in negative attitudes.

Gardner (1985) defines attitude as "an evaluative reaction to an object, based on a person's beliefs and judgements." Attitudes are also closely associated with individual's values and beliefs and may enable or inhibit behaviours in learning and non-learning situations. Based on this view, Wenden (1991) suggested that attitude could be regarded as a complex construct consisting of three correlated parts including cognitive, affective and behavioral facets.

From the point of view of behaviorism, cognitivism and humanism attitudes can be divided on three main components: affective, behavioural, cognitive.

**Affective aspect:** It involves a 'feeling and emotional reaction' of individuals toward an object. The process of learning is emotional in nature, and is affected by a spectrum of emotions (Choy & Saleh, 2006; Harn, 2015; Liu, 2016). Attitude refers to learners' dispositional feelings toward learning and how they are



predisposed to their immediate environment. In addition, Choy and Saleh (2006) maintain that the inner thoughts and feelings of second language learners are widely thought to influence their attitudes toward the target language.

Behavioral deals with how people act and react in certain situations. It is a representation of the predisposition of learners towards learning behaviours (Abidin et al., 2012). Kara (2009) asserts that positive attitudes result in successful learning. Learners who have positive attitudes toward learning the language will be more prone to focus on learning tasks, store larger volumes of information and become emotionally involved in their learning.

It is concerned with how learners feel relative to the object of attitude, what they believe and what they think about it (Abidin et al., 2012). With regards to language learning, this refers to students's beliefs about the input they receive and their conception of learning. Cognitive attitudes could be described as follows: first to connect prior knowledge with new information, and then to build new knowledge, after that the learned to test it and apply in various contexts.

Together, the three components make up what is known as the ABC model of attitudes – a triad not to be confused with rational theory (McLeod, 2009) and encapsulate what we feel, think and do toward an object or person. For example, aversion to an English teacher due to fear can result in avoidance behavior and negative cognition. Mind, feeling and behavior are intertwined, but thoughts and actions can usually be adjusted more readily than feelings (Johnston A D 2014).

### **Aim of the Research**

The point of departure in the present study is to discuss EFL college students' attitudes toward learning English as foreign language.

### **Limits of the Study**

The scope of this study is limited to EFL students who are in the fourth level at the University of Mosul, College of Education for Humanities, Department of English Morning Study Program in 2024 / 2025.

### **Value of the Study**

The present research contributes students' perceptions of grammar as a separate academic discipline and its use in language practice outside the university. It is about the ways foreign language learners interact with grammar in and out of class. The study also investigates how much learners like, dislike, avoid and want more English grammar instruction. It looks into students' perceptions in relation to the relevance and need of learning grammar in English; their attitudes towards language use beyond formal academia.

### **Definition of Key Term**

#### **Attitudes**



Scholars have defined attitude in many different ways. Attitude is a "mindset that is developed over time and predetermines responses to new information, experiences and situations" where it "reflects a tendency to respond positively or negatively towards the target of evaluation": abstract (Eagly and Chaiken, 1993). Brown (2001), for instance, underscores the affective aspect of attitudes in terms of feelings, selfconcept and relations to others. Gawronski (2007) defines attitudes as relatively stable dispositions which can be deconstructed into cognitive, emotional, pragmatic and SAP dimensions. According to Dolan (2011, quoted in Kranawetter, 2012), attitudes can be viewed as feelings or opinions which reflect either approval or disapproval of an object.

For this study, attitude is operationally treated as the degree to which EFL undergraduate students react in favour of or against the contents of a sample questionnaire constructed and believed to measure their attitudes towards English grammar..

## Chapter Two

### Literature Review

#### Types of attitude:

Affective aspects are a key part of language development, and they can scaffold or undermine second language learning. They are internal mental states that can affect how learners act and behave. These states of mind mirror favorable or unfavorable and positive or negative attitudes toward a particular stimulus. There are three types of attitudes about languages and dialects in second language contexts, following Stern (1983), namely attitudes towards the target language community and its speakers (group-specific attitudes), attitudes of learning the language per se and general ones against other communities. These attitudes differ at the level of the individual learner (the degree to which that person is ethnocentric or authoritarian) and also in relation to society (where language learning occurs). As a result, learners in monolingual contexts may form different attitudes from those in bilingual ones (Ellis, 1985).

Brown (2000:6, as quoted in Tahaineh & Daana 2013) refers the beliefs learners have about members of the target language community and their own culture as attitudes. Lambert (1967) in Macnamara (1973) classifies the orientations of attitude to learning a language as: integrative and instrumental. Integrativeness is a motivation to involve oneself and become a member of the target language community, whereas instrumental orientation focuses on pragmatic benefits such as career opportunities or access to education. Studies indicate that integrative orientation is a better predictor of successful language learning than instrumental.



One of the first and well-known explorations of attitudes to language was current by That discovered connections between many kinds linked to unjustifiably focused on Gardner, Lambert: ( 1972. They mentioned the relevance of group attitudes, and contended that to empathize or take an interest both follow positive perceptions of the community of target-language speakers, which "encourage intrinsically motivated learning". They found that there was a significant relationship between students' attitudes and language achievement. Positive attitudes help to motivation and interaction; negative attitudes may result in little or no exposure to the language input, blocking progress (Brown, 1994). Cited in Dörnyei (2005), Gardner (2001) also claims that attempts to learn a language are not likely to be successful unless attitudes towards the target language are positive enough. Because attitudes are learned and developed through experience, teachers can have a significant influence on correcting misunderstandings of other cultures and promoting respect for and appreciation of cultural difference (Brown, 1994).

### **Language Attitudes**

Motivation and Attitudes are widely regarded in FLT as important factors influencing learners' achievement. Attitude is closely related to motivation and a negative towards the language can lead learners to refuse learning. According to Gardner (1985, as cited in Çolak, 2008), learners' attitudes toward a second language play a key role in their motivation towards learning the language.

### **Aspects of Language Attitude**

A useful model for understanding attitudes is provided by Wenden (1991) who conceptualizes them in terms of three interrelated components: cognitive, affective and behavioral. The cognitive part refers to learners' knowledge on the learning object. The affective dimension is about emotions and how we feel towards the language, i.e. like or dislike it. Behavioural: Behaviour refers to the actions or intention of learners in learning the language.

Learning is considered as the process that leads to positive changes in the individual across cognitive, emotional and physical domains (Kara, 2009). Learning, besides being a cognitive process is also social and psychological. As such, attitudes can contribute differently to language learning outcomes when interpreted in terms of these three dimensions – cognitive, affective and behavioral. These elements are based on cognition, humanism and behaviorism theories. The behavioral, cognitive and emotional aspects of attitudes in language learning are briefly discussed in the following.

### **.Behavioral Aspect of Attitude:**

Attitude from the behavioral dimension is how people behave and react in certain situations. In language learning, the successful learning process also inspires learners to mimic speakers of a target language and take on some behaviors



appropriate for that speech community. Constructive learning behaviors, such as participation and persistence of involvement in the learning activity, mirror positive attitudes. Kara (2009) highlights that students with positive attitudes generally engage in expected behaviors toward their academic disciplines, such as increased involvement, staying on task and motivation to learn. They are, therefore, more active in problem-solving for everyday life problems and learning of activity related content and skills, as well as affectively engaged with the learning experience.

### **Cognitive Aspect of Attitude**

Cognitive dimension of attitude is students' beliefs, perceptions and misconceptions towards the learning content and to language learning in general. This category is related to how the learners deal with information and finally analyze and absorb new input. Cognitive attitudes consist of the stages of new data association with what has gone before, creation of new meaning, assessment and testing for accuracy of knowledge received, and transfer to a range of other contexts (Orellove & Sobsey: 1980).

### **Emotional (Affective) Aspect of Attitude**

The affective or emotional component of attitude emphasizes the significance of feelings and emotions in learning. Feng and Chen (2009) also suggest cognition is an emotion-based process, as teaching-learning practices are primarily personal interactions directed by emotions. Attitudes allow learners to say, 'I like or I don't like the language or the classroom.' Studies show that learners' internal emotions and feelings have an impact on learners in terms of how they perceive the target language and their attitudes towards it (Choy & Troudi, 2006, cited in Zainol Abidin, 2012).

Attitude is determined by a person's belief of the consequences or attributes of performing the behaviour (behavioural beliefs), and their evaluation of these consequences or attributes. Learners are more likely to adopt an attitude that is favorable to a given behavior when it is believed the behavior will result in positive outcomes which hold value for them. By contrast, negative expectations bring about negative attitudes. As a result, attitudes may be investigated in three interrelated aspects, namely behavioral, cognitive, and affective, each of which makes distinctive contributions to language learning. These are analogous to the basic assumptions of behaviorism, cognitivism and humanism respectively as applied to language attitudes.



## Chapter Three Procedures

### Research Design and Data Collection

This research is kind of aiming to reveal students' perception toward English language learning. Given the complexity and multidimensionality of attitudes, a broad survey is necessary for a deeper understanding of the learning situation as it really is. Accordingly, the researcher employed a qualitative research design in order to more effectively delve below the surface of students' attitudes rather than describe behaviour found on top. To the end of that explanation, this study intended to understand how students view EL learning and act upon it as an object of their learning.

A one-paged close-ended question is used to gather the data by a researcher. Closed-ended questionnaires are those that have a restricted set of answer options from which respondents must choose (such as "yes" or "no"), therefore making responses clearer and yet consistent. The questionnaire was developed by the researcher based on previously employed tools in other studies with adaptations that applied to the objectives of this study. The scale consisted of 30 items and was applied to a sample of 50 students in order to explore their attitude towards learning English. The questionnaire questions were categorized in terms of three dimensions of attitude: behavioral, cognitive and affective. The employment of closed questions made it possible for the researcher to reveal uncompromisingly students' feelings and orientations towards learning English.

### Data Analysis Procedures

A series of systematic steps was used to analyze the data gathered. Afterwards, the answers of all questionnaires were read attentively. Then, the data were categorized based on three dimensions of attitude. The answers were, however, used to capture typical profiles of the participants. Finally, the findings were presented in detail to delineate the major findings of the study and then discussed into summary conclusion.

### Population and Sample

The following section explains population, sample and the process of sampling. Population refers to all the members of a certain population or community that constitute the units that are being studied (Podesva & Sharma, 2013). Ditto, Denscombe (2010) defines population as the pool of things or people that are relevant to the focus of study. 3 Alternatively, a sample denotes a subset of observations drawn from the population for inspection (Best, 1981).

Sampling In this study, with regard to Arikunto (2006), sample is considered as the subset of the population which has simulating features. That is, as Mills and Gay (2019) clarify: a sample being a few of the individuals or things in this



population that are used to draw conclusion about all these individuals or elements. Denscombe (2010) classifies sampling into two as representative sample that is often used in quantitative research where one studies a large population and the exploratory sample or qualitative sampling suitable on small scale qualitative projects.

Sampling is a process of selection where from the population some units (individuals or samples) are selected and their study results are extended/ generalised/ reapplied to the entire body from which they were selected (Kothari, 2004). sampling is used by most researchers because of limitations of time, access and money that preclude the entire population from being included or studied (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007).

As for sample size, Borg and Gall (1979) claim that correlational design demands at least thirty cases. Nonetheless, some researchers do not consider that there is a proper formula for determining sample size seeing that this will greatly vary depending on what the study's topic and nature of the population are (Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2007; David & Sutton, 2004). However, more respondents are often believed to be better samples for the population.

### **Participants:**

The participants in this study are EFL learners who have registered at English departments BSUCEDUH in the 2024/2025 academic year. A total of 50 students (both males and females) were recruited as representative sample from this population.

### **Attitude Measurement:**

The sifting evidence of attitude assessment had been examined and no suitable scale was found for the current study. Thus, a questionnaire to measure students' attitudes was developed through these steps:

1. Objective and content determination of the questionnaire.
2. Writing articles in four tries using the specified material.
3. Validating the items using expert opinions.
4. Setting the scoring for each domain.
5. A pilot study examining the reliability and discriminative ability of the questionnaire.

Finalizing the questionnaire according to reliability and item analysis. The 30-item questionnaire with two answers as response options was provided at the end (see Appendix).

### **Administration:**



The survey was carried out among the selected sample in December 2024. The researcher scored the responses and analyzed statistically data to investigate English grammar attitude among students.

## Chapter Four Results and Discussion

### Findings from the Questionnaire:

The outcomes of the close-ended questionnaire revealed that most students held favorable attitudes towards learning English. They are set out below under the headings:

**Table (1)**

The affective aspects of students' attitude toward English language learning

No.	Items	Agree	Disagree
1	I did not feel nervous when the teacher asked me questions in class	5	45
2	Learning English is fun.	50	0
3	Learning English for me is a pride.	50	0
4	Learning English makes me more confident.	50	0
5	I am interested in learning English.	50	0
6	One of my essential goals in life is to learn English.	50	0
7	I always cannot wait for English lessons.	35	15
8	Learning English puts me in a good mood.	50	0
9	I prefer learning my mother tongue rather than learning a foreign language.	0	50
10	Honestly, I am not interested in learning English.	10	40

From Table 1, the researcher noted that students rely on English as something of an attitude for learning. Most students described English as fun and beneficial to study. Bur, a group of students indicated they are less inspired to learning English..



**Table (2)**

The behavioral aspects of students' attitude toward English language learning

No.	Items	Agree	Disagree
11	I like practicing English like a native speaker does	50	0
12	I have more good friends after learning English.	50	0
13	I want to speak English in class.	50	0
14	By learning English, my personality gets better.	50	0
15	I am too worried about using English in public.	35	15
16	I often procrastinate to do English homework.	20	30
17	I was very nervous about speaking English in class.	15	35
18	I feel ashamed to speak English in front of the class.	10	40
19	I never asked for homework or additional assignments from the teacher if I was absent.	15	35
20	When English was taught, I was not eager to attend the class.	0	50

Table 2 Students' attitude towards learning English language collected is as shown in Table – 2. The findings reveal that all the statements made a positive impact on the students' English learning consciousness and attitudes. The table also shows that students are happier to participate in English. So, it may be said that the behavioral attitudes of the students were favorable towards English language..

**Table (3)**

The Cognitive aspects of students' attitude toward English language learning

No.	Items	Agree	Disagree
21	By mastering English, I can quickly learn other lessons well	50	0
22	I have more information and comprehension of alternate subjects when learning English.	45	5



23	As I would like to think, individuals who speak more than one language are entirely learned.	50	0
24	Learning English encourages me to convey English adequately.	50	0
25	Learning English will enable me to create new considerations.	30	20
26	English subject has a substance that covers numerous fields of learning.	50	0
27	Honestly, I consider English to pass the exams.	0	50
28	In reality, I cannot significantly affect the information from English subjects.	5	45
29	I am not happy with my execution in the English subject.	25	25
30	As I see it, the English language is troublesome and entangled to be learned	5	45

Table 3 demonstrates students' attitudes towards the position and importance of the English language. This reflects in the ratings (as shown by Table 3) where students show value for English impelled to a large extent by pressure of globalization and the future prospect. The results from the questionnaire indicate that a significant number of students possess positive cognitive attitude towards learning English.

Generally, the results show that the students have a high positive attitude towards learning English. For the majority of students, they acknowledge their learning is of personal and academic benefit which in turn has been related to motivation to learn. Attitudes reflect a reflection of student involvement and orientation to learning.

Furthermore, students' attitudes are affected by three factors: affective, cognitive and behavioural. Among these, the category affective got the highest positive responses because students like learning English and they have knowledge about the relevance it has in their education. Students are seen expressing their strong emotions, pride and self esteem while they have opportunities to come in contact with the language; naturally, students are real interested and enthusiastic learners of listening, speaking, practicing English.

Behavioural attitude of students was positively on the high degree in commitment, confidence and active participation. It seems that students get a lot out of their interaction with English and are influenced by a drive to do well at it.



Attitudes of English learning were positive, and so were cognitive attitudes towards English. Great value with respect to passing exams, gaining new information and using internet services in areas of science or technology was attributed to English by many respondents. Students are well aware that the learning of English reflects to wider horizons of knowledge and personal growth.

### **Conclusions:**

The study finds that students have favorable attitudes of learning English in the affective, cognitive and behaviour aspects. Such attitudes towards EFL learning can be perceived from the answers of the students in the questionnaire result and indicate their beliefs and attitudes toward learning English.

Moreover, the study also implies students' attitudes are important factors that affect their achievement as well as motivation in learning English. The more positive attitudes they have, the higher is their probability to engage themselves, persist in learning and succeed in language acquisition. Positive attitude is a manifestation of their interest in English and an indicator of students' motivation as well as overall achievement in language learning.

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## Appendix

### College Students' Attitudes Towards Learning English

First	Affective Aspect		
No.	Items	Agree	Disagree
1	I did not feel nervous when the teacher asked me questions in class		
2	Learning English is fun.		
3	Learning English for me is a pride.		
4	Learning English makes me more confident.		
5	I am interested in learning English.		
6	One of my essential goals in life is to learn English.		
7	I always cannot wait for English lessons.		
8	Learning English puts me in a good mood.		
9	I prefer learning my mother tongue rather than learning a foreign language.		
10	Honestly, I am not interested in learning English.		
Second	Behavioral aspects		
11	I like practicing English like a native speaker does		
12	I have more good friends after learning English.		
13	I want to speak English in class.		
14	By learning English, my personality gets better.		
15	I am too worried about using English in public.		
16	I often procrastinate to do English homework.		
17	I was very nervous about speaking English in class.		
18	I feel ashamed to speak English in front of the class.		
19	I never asked for homework or additional assignments from the teacher if I was absent.		
20	When English was taught, I was not eager to attend the class.		
Third	Cognitive Aspect		
21	By mastering English, I can quickly learn other lessons well		
22	I have more information and comprehension of		



	alternate subjects when learning English.		
23	As I would like to think, individuals who speak more than one language are entirely learned.		
24	Learning English encourages me to convey English adequately.		
25	Learning English will enable me to create new considerations.		
26	English subject has a substance that covers numerous fields of learning.		
27	Honestly, I consider English to pass the exams.		
28	In reality, I cannot significantly affect the information from English subjects.		
29	I am not happy with my execution in the English subject.		
30	As I see it, the English language is troublesome and entangled to be learned		