

Attitude Towards and Proficiency in English of High School Seniors

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Abstract- This descriptive-correlational research was conducted with the following objectives: to determine the attitude towards English of the high school seniors as an entire group and when classified according to sex, grade in English, type of school, level of mass media exposure, and parents' educational attainment; to determine the English proficiency of the high school seniors as an entire group and when classified according to sex, grade in English, type of school, level of mass media exposure, and parents' educational attainment; and to find out if attitude towards English is significantly related to the English proficiency of the high school seniors. A questionnaire composed of four parts was used in the gathering of data. The findings are as follows: (1) In general, the attitude towards English of the high school seniors is "somewhat positive;" (2) Generally, high school seniors have "very satisfactory" level of English proficiency; and (3) The high school seniors' attitude towards English is significantly related to their English proficiency.

Index Terms- attitude towards English, English proficiency, mass media exposure, high school seniors

I. INTRODUCTION

Attitudes signify what people think of, how they feel, and how they tend or intend to behave toward an object. Overt behavior of people is determined not only by what they would like to do but also by what they think they should do, by what they are used to doing, and by the consequences which they anticipate. That is, social norms, peer expectations, established habits, expected consequences, and situational factors also influence one's behavior. Attitudes are facilitative causes, but their strength may not always be sufficient to overcome the forces produced by other variables such as social pressure (Arul, 2000, in Billena, 2007).

According to Starks and Paltridge (1996), in Karahan (2007), learning a language is closely related to the attitudes toward the languages. In Siregar (2009), attitude refers to "a hypothetical construct used to explain the direction and persistence of human behavior" (Baker, 1992). In other words, it can represent internal thoughts, feelings and tendencies in behavior across a variety of contexts. Although an attitude in individual, it has origins in collective behavior. Moreover, some characteristics of attitude are: it is learnt, it is not inherited, it is also likely to be relatively stable, and it has a tendency to persist. Attitudes also play a vital role in language growth or decay, restoration or destruction. In other words, the status and importance of a language in society and within an individual can be adopted and learnt (Baker, 1988, in Siregar, 2009).

Many teachers believe that students' attitudes toward a subject affect their achievement in the subject (Giner, 2002). Attitude stirs passion and drive and result to empowerment (Mesiti, 1999). Similarly, Alimen (1999) confirmed that indeed, attitude is what makes students work to gain achievement in school especially in English. In addition, Savignon (2002) accentuated that the learner's attitude is and without doubt the single most important factor in the learner's success. Whether the motivation of the learner is integrative or instrumental, the development of communicative competence involves the whole learner. Hence, she concluded that the most successful teaching programs are those that take into account the affective as well as cognitive aspects of language learning.

According to Holbrook, et al. (2005), in Domingo (2007), there is a positive correlation between the amount of knowledge a person possess and the personal importance of the person's attitudes toward the object. Falsario (2000) in her study found that pupils had an uncertain attitude towards English as a subject. This implies that there is a need to develop a favorable attitude towards the English subject among pupils since attitude was found to have a positive relationship to performance. A positive attitude leads to a better performance in English and other subjects as well.

II. RESEARCH ELABORATIONS

The study utilized the survey-correlational method of research. The study involved 182 randomly selected samples from the population of 335 high school seniors. The participants were selected at random using lottery technique. The dependent variable in this study was English proficiency. The independent variable was attitude towards English. The antecedent variables were the students' characteristics such as sex, grade in English, type of school, level of mass media exposure, and parents' educational attainment. The questionnaire was composed of four parts. Part One obtained data on the characteristics of the respondents which included their sex, grade in English, type of school, level of mass media exposure, and parents' educational attainment. Part Two of the research instrument gathered data on the level of mass media exposure. Part Three gathered data on the attitude towards English. Part Four was the English Proficiency Test. The researcher administered the questionnaire with the help of some English teachers. The respondents who were involved in the study were predetermined by drawing of lots. The data gathered were tabulated, processed, analyzed, and interpreted. The statistical tools utilized in the analysis of data were frequency count, percentage, mean, standard deviation, t-

test for independent samples, one-way ANOVA and Gamma. All inferential tests were set at 0.05 alpha level of significance.

III. RESULTS OR FINDINGS

Attitude towards English of High School Seniors

In general, the attitude towards English of the high school seniors is "somewhat positive."

The research also found out that high school seniors who are females; with outstanding and very satisfactory grades in English; from private school and state university and college (SUC); with very high and high levels of mass media exposure; whose mothers have achieved post-graduate education, are college graduates, have attained college level and have finished high school; and whose fathers have attained post-graduate education, are college graduates, and have attained college level and elementary level have "somewhat positive" attitude towards English. On the other hand, high school seniors who are males; those whose grades in English are satisfactory, fair and needs improvement; those who come from public school; those with average, low, and very low level of mass media exposure; those whose mothers have attained high school level, are elementary graduates and have attained elementary level; and those whose fathers have finished high school, have attained high school level, and have finished high school have "neutral" attitude towards.

The standard deviations show a narrow dispersion on the students' attitude towards English. This indicates that high school seniors have more or less similar attitude towards English.

English Proficiency of High School Seniors

Generally, high school seniors have "very satisfactory" level of English proficiency.

On the basis of the result, female students; those with outstanding and very satisfactory grades in English; those students from private school and state university and college; those with very high, high and average levels of mass media exposure; those whose mothers and fathers have earned post-graduate, have finished college and have attained college level; have "very satisfactory" level of English proficiency. However, male students; those with satisfactory and fair grades in English; those students who come from public schools; those with either low or very low level of exposure to mass media; those whose mothers and fathers have finished high school, have achieved high school level, have finished elementary, and have achieved elementary level; have "satisfactory" level of English proficiency except for those whose grade in English needs improvement where their English proficiency was "fair."

Relationship between Students' Attitude Towards English and their English Proficiency

The data show that majority (60 percent) of students with positive attitude towards English have very satisfactory English proficiency compared to 40 percent of students with outstanding English proficiency. However, among students with somewhat positive attitude towards English, majority (61.10 percent) have very satisfactory, less than a quarter (24.40 percent) have satisfactory, 11.10 percent have outstanding while only very few (3.30 percent) have less satisfactory English proficiency. Among

students with neutral attitude towards English, majority (67.90 percent) have satisfactory English proficiency, nearly one-fourth (23.80 percent) have very satisfactory and very few have either less satisfactory (4.80 percent) or outstanding (3.60 percent) English proficiency. Finally, for students who have somewhat negative attitude towards English, all of them (100 percent) posted a satisfactory English proficiency.

The test of association between students' attitude towards English and their English proficiency using Gamma, indicates that there is a significant relationship between students' attitude towards English and their English proficiency. This means that students with better attitude towards English tend to become more proficient in English.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

1. As a whole, the attitude towards English of the high school seniors is "somewhat positive."
2. In its entirety, the English proficiency of the high school seniors is "very satisfactory."
3. Attitude towards English is significantly related to English proficiency. Better attitude towards English can be equated to higher proficiency in English.

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