

**ATTITUDES TOWARD ENGLISH : A
PEDAGOGICAL STUDY**

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ABSTRACT

Different studies of attitudes towards language are concerned with what language is more appropriate in a specific context . Attitudes towards using the more appropriate language in any speech community have a high correlation with the relative social status of its speakers . There are many reasons beyond studying any foreign language : to achieve a social power , to get a job , to be able to travel , to gain parental praise , to speak with the people of foreign community , to improve one's education , to satisfy a language requirement , etc.

The study consists of two parts : Theoretical and Practical . In the theoretical part , the study explains the importance of English as international language . Another section deals with the " attitude " as a linguistic term with some definitions of it and its importance in learning foreign language . This part also includes a section about the importance of the teacher as a model of the learners of a foreign language . And the final section of this part discusses the parental support and encouragement which really have an influential role on the learner's attitudes towards learning any foreign language.

In the practical side , a questionnaire was designed about the attitudes of fifth- stage students towards English language . At the end , there is a conclusion of the study and some pedagogical recommendations for the teachers of English.

English As International Language

Generally, speakers have strong positive feelings concerning their native language. This happens in case of talking about intimate or informal contexts with members of the same group. Positive attitudes about native language are engendered by the role it plays as an identity for speakers of that language. Each community has some shared beliefs and attitudes toward foreign language.

It is important to pay too much attention to the relation of attitudes with English language learning because stating any achievement in English language should relate to the attitudes towards that specific language. We should make an understanding of English language learning which pays attention to attitudes and their relation to the process of language learning. Attitudes toward learning "English" are relatively specific in that the attitude object, i.e. learning English, is clearly definite. Interest in English language could involve many activities e.g. learning, speaking, and hearing. It seems that attitudes towards English language and attitudes towards the English textbooks are obviously relevant to learning English in the classroom. It is not surprising that a measure of attitudes toward learning English would suit many indices of achievement in English. After the second World War, English became the world's most important international language of wider communication.

Attitude As Influential Factor

Attitudes are gained as a factor of group membership. Our attitudes toward particular kinds of language are results of the social structure. Thus, language can be used as a means to discriminate and categorize people. Sociolinguists have paid major interest to the study of attitudes toward language and its uses.

There are various definitions of attitudes: Allport (1954: 45) states that "an attitude is a mental and neural state of readiness, organized through experience, exerting a directive or dynamic influence upon the individual's response to all objects and situations with which it is related." Attitudes have cognitive, affective, and conative components. The "cognitive" component points the structure of the individual's belief. The "affective" refers to the emotional reactions, and the "conative" to the tendency to behave toward the attitude object. If any linguist tries to measure an attitude, he usually infers it according to the individuals' reactions to some belief statements. Gardner (1985:9) defines the individual attitude as "an evaluative reaction to some referent or attitude object, inferred on the basis of the individual's beliefs or opinions about the referent."

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Most people have likes and dislikes concerning foreign languages and say that they sound coarse , ugly , harsh , beautiful , etc. Such attitudes are based either on the attitudes people have to the speakers of these languages or on certain views concerning languages which were acquired at school or in the home . Whatever the social or psychological factors which may influence an individuals' structure , that structure is likely to be reflected in patterns of language use . In some varieties of English e.g. Cockney , the glottal stop has been termed an ugly sound used by low, common people . But the glottal stops in some languages like Arabic and German are considered respectable and acceptable to their speakers. Therefore , testing attitudes to foreign languages can be useful to explain unreasonable hostility to some languages or their speakers . Cronbach (1977: 739) explains that **"an attitude toward an object or concept consists of the interpretations a person makes regarding its value for various purposes."**

Generally speaking, studies of attitudes toward learning English language obtain higher relationships with achievements than studies of attitudes toward the foreign community. Other factors of determining attitude variables are either educational or social : examples of educational attitudes are those toward the teacher , the course , learning the language and so on. Whereas attitudes which focus on the social implications of English language learning include such matters as the individuals' attitudinal disposition toward English social groups . Both educational and social attitudes play a great role in the English language learning process . The concept of **" attitudes toward learning English language "** is complex : so we should expect that some aspects of the attitude are more related to achievement of this language than others . Attitudes towards learning English language also relate to other factors . Sex differences almost seem to affect attitudes toward English language learning : females tend to represent more positive attitudes than do males .Attitudes toward English language learning also vary from one geographical area to another . Students in one place may demonstrate more positive attitudes than those of another area . Students' attitudes are probably affected by a number of cultural characteristics .

One of the most important attitudinal factors is the attitude of the student to the language and to its speakers . Attitudes toward the other community become more favorable the more years students spent studying foreign language (Gardner and Smythe ;in Gardner , 1985:46). Attitudes are influential in foreign language learning because they orientate the person to look for opportunities to learn the language . Experiences associated with foreign language learning can have an influence on students' attitudes. It seems that changes in social attitudes can be earned if the student has new experiences of studying foreign language. It

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is clear that students who visit the other community and report active participation are the ones who have the more favourable attitudes toward the language of that society. The learners' motivation for language study is determined by their attitudes to the whole process of learning a foreign language.

There are several different types of attitudes: attitudes toward learning the foreign language, the speakers of such language, the teacher, and etc. It seems that attitudes toward learning any foreign language and attitudes toward the foreign course are more relevant to learning such language than are attitudes towards the speakers of this language or other foreign languages. Therefore, a measure of attitudes towards English language should take into consideration the achievement of the student in English. Another thing is that a student may have positive attitude toward a foreign language but prefers not to learn it because of a feeling that the course is inapplicable or he dislikes the teacher.

The Teacher As A Model

Another factor of attitude is the experience of learning a language. HERNICK and KENNEDY (in Gardner, 1985:44) suggest that foreign student "to learn languages rapidly creates feelings of failure, and it is obvious that such dissatisfaction could generalize to attitudes toward learning the language among some students." However, the correlation between attitudes and achievement tends to increase when students grow older. The older students seem to have positive attitudes toward English language since they have more knowledge of the language than the younger ones. LILE (2002:1) assures that "if a child is motivated enough he/she can accomplish learning of any scale." The essential aim of a teacher is to attract the students attention and direct their minds towards learning language. Teachers can use many ways so that they help their students become motivated and eager to learn the language. BANTJES (Ibid.: 2) states that "the attitude the student has towards the learning environment, the teacher, the material, and towards him/herself all affect this level of anxiety."

The teacher should make a proper classroom explanation, thereby, the students can well understand what the teacher is saying. In the English as a foreign language (EFL) classroom, the task of the teacher is more essential to create anxiety of the students because they should comprehend, learn, and speak in a language other than their native one. The teacher must plan the lesson previously. And the nature of the class and the students' levels represent other important reasons for the efficiency of the class.

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There is an evidence for the separate roles made by intelligence and aptitude and by attitudes and motivation in the development of foreign language learning . The students with strong motivation to learn English language obtain good grades in English at school . It is apparent that there is an attitudinal basis for this motivation . Also , the student's identification with his English teacher and his sensitivity to other people's feelings affect his attitudes and progress in English language learning . Attitudes represent an essential component of motivation as Cook (in Gardner and Lambert , 1969: 134) states that **"attitudes , values , and personality traits as "motive like constructs" are of major significance in determining behavior"** . Doing well or poorly in a programme of language study could not affect attitudes toward that specific language nor its speakers because attitudes are a more stable personal characteristic which influences and determines one's progress in learning a foreign language .

If the students fail to go on with the lesson , the teacher should change his way of teaching and search for another so as not to lose the energy (efficiency)of the class.Life (2002:2)states that the lesson must be interesting "with a lot of changes from a writing exercise.to a speaking .a listening .back to writing , and

so on.all in the same class ".The teacher should use vocabulary items the students can understand and material they would find interesting .The teacher may not be very strict with the students.He should not be upset when the students can't understand what is asked of them.He must have a friendly relationship with his students and motivate their energies to learn and participate in the class.Life advises the teacher ,writing that:

When the students realize that you are not going to get angry,you are being nice and understanding and the reason you are trying so hard is because it is important to you that your students learn and do well, the natural human reaction is to reciprocate and do something nice in return. in this case.study. (Ibid:3)

THE ROLE OF PARENTS

Parental support and encouragement seem to underlie the attitude . The strong similarity of parents and children's attitudes reveal that attitudes are determined and developed in the home before language learning starts . Also , when we measure attitudes before language learning actually starts , we would get the same general results . Gardner and Lambert (1969: 144) comment that **"students often bring the attitudes of their parents or closest friends to school with them and educators wonder if these private matters are really the business of education"** . Skillful teachers can tell these private views out and discuss them with the students . Foreign language learning depends , in part at least , on the attitudes the students have towards their own and others' manner of speech , and these are closely connected with the attitudes they have to the community to which they belong , their political and social relations with theirs , and their view of the relative status of the two communities .

However , there are two potential roles of the parents . First , their role may be active by encouraging their children to learn foreign language urging them to do well and reinforce any help made by the school . They also play an active negative role when they tell the child that learning a foreign language is merely a waste of time . The second (passive) role is more subtle than the first one since the parents may not be aware of it . This role is represented by the parents' attitudes toward the people speaking foreign language . If the parents have positive attitudes toward the foreign community , they will encourage an integrative motive in the child , whereas parents, with negative attitudes ,will deter the development of positive attitudes in the child . That is to say : the parents may encourage their children to develop their foreign language study and reinforce their success .On the other hand , they might have negative attitudes towards the foreign community and thereby develop similar attitudes in their children (Gardner , 1985: 110).

It is apparent that parents really have an influential role on children's attitudes towards learning any foreign language . Parental awareness is a crucial to the students' attitudes towards foreign language . Parents should participate in the students' learning of a foreign language . If the practices at school are not followed at home , it could decrease classroom efforts. There should be appropriate parent/ teacher / student cooperation and everyone can understand what is expected from each other .

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The Practice (Questionnaire)

Qualitative research is considered unreliable by many linguists because of limited samples , possible subjective biases , and lack of explanatory power .Linguists seem to conduct quantitative studies which relate attitudinal – motivational factors of various kinds of academic achievement including many of foreign language proficiency . In attitude research , it is desirable to make an integration of both qualitative and quantitative procedures .

Method

1. Material :-

This questionnaire was designed and included to obtain information about the attitudes of fifth- stage , of Al- Kifah preparatory school for boys and Al-Ashar preparatory school for girls , towards English language . This consists of questions about the student's sex , parents occupation , and the place of living . The items of this test were put by making use of positively and negatively worded items . The seventeen statements used in this study were emotive in nature to elicit a reaction from the students . They emphasize the relationship of English language to the categories of education , social interaction , prestige , career , etc. The student has to choose one of the alternatives below for each item .

The Alternatives:- Agree | Neutral | Disagree.

2. Subjects :-

Fifty preparatory students at the fifth –stage served as subjects . Students choose the alternative which best indicate their personal attitudes toward English language .

3. Procedure :-

Subjects were tested in their schools during a lesson . Students were given items to write down their answers . All subjects completed the attitude questionnaire . The results of the questionnaire are shown in the following tables :-

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Table No. (1)
Measures of Attitudes of (25) Male Students.

Item No	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
1	24	-	1
2	8	12	5
3	-	1	24
4	21	4	-
5	6	12	7
6	9	11	5
7	2	16	7
8	22	2	1
9	2	16	7
10	22	3	-
11	2	15	8
12	3	8	14
13	2	5	18
14	22	3	-
15	2	6	17
16	12	12	1
17	22	2	1
Total	181	128	116

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Table No. (2)
Measures of Attitudes of (25)Female Students.

Item No	Agree	Neutral	Disagree
1	24	1	-
2	22	3	-
3	-	-	25
4	24	-	1
5	13	10	2
6	22	2	1
7	18	6	1
8	23	1	1
9	12	9	4
10	24	1	-
11	11	10	4
12	11	9	5
13	1	1	23
14	25	-	-
15	8	10	7
16	23	1	1
17	25	-	-
Total	286	64	75

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Table No. (3)
Measures of Attitudes of All (50) Students.

Item No.	Agree	Percentage	Neutral	Percentage	Disagree	Percentage
1	48	10.27	1	0.52	1	0.52
2	30	6.44	15	7.81	5	2.63
3	-	-	1	0.52	49	25.66
4	45	9.63	4	2.08	1	0.52
5	19	4.06	22	11.46	9	4.73
6	31	6.65	13	6.78	6	3.14
7	20	4.30	22	11.46	8	4.20
8	45	9.63	3	1.56	2	1.04
9	14	2.99	25	13.02	11	5.76
10	46	9.86	4	2.08	-	-
11	13	2.78	25	13.02	12	6.28
12	14	2.99	17	8.86	19	9.94
13	3	0.68	6	3.13	41	21.46
14	47	10.06	3	1.56	-	-
15	10	2.14	16	8.33	24	12.56
16	35	7.49	13	6.77	2	1.04
17	47	10.06	2	1.04	1	0.52
Total	467	100%	192	100%	191	100%

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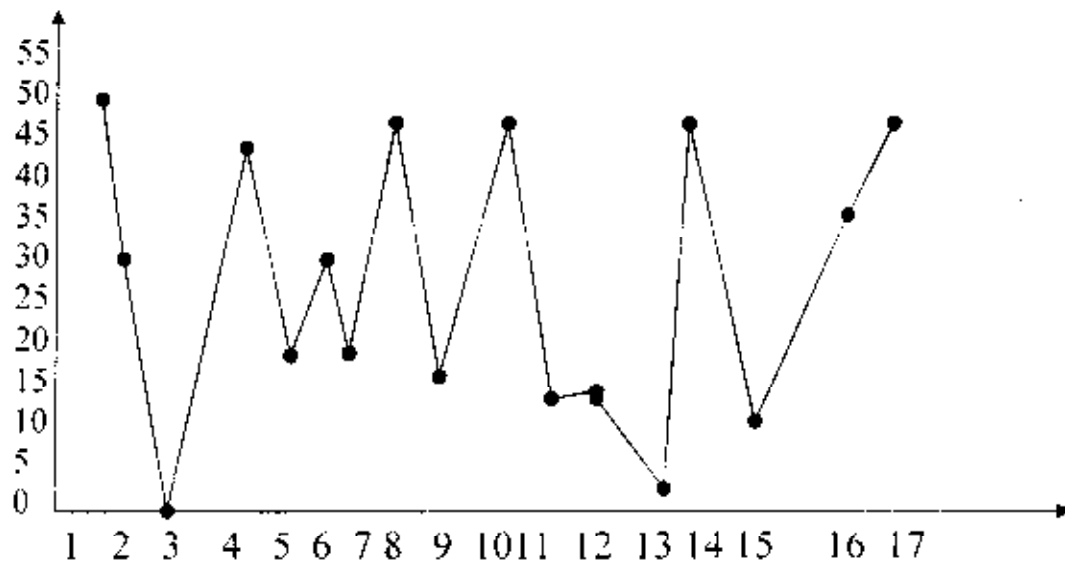


Figure No.(1)

Agreement of students with the Items of the Questionnaire

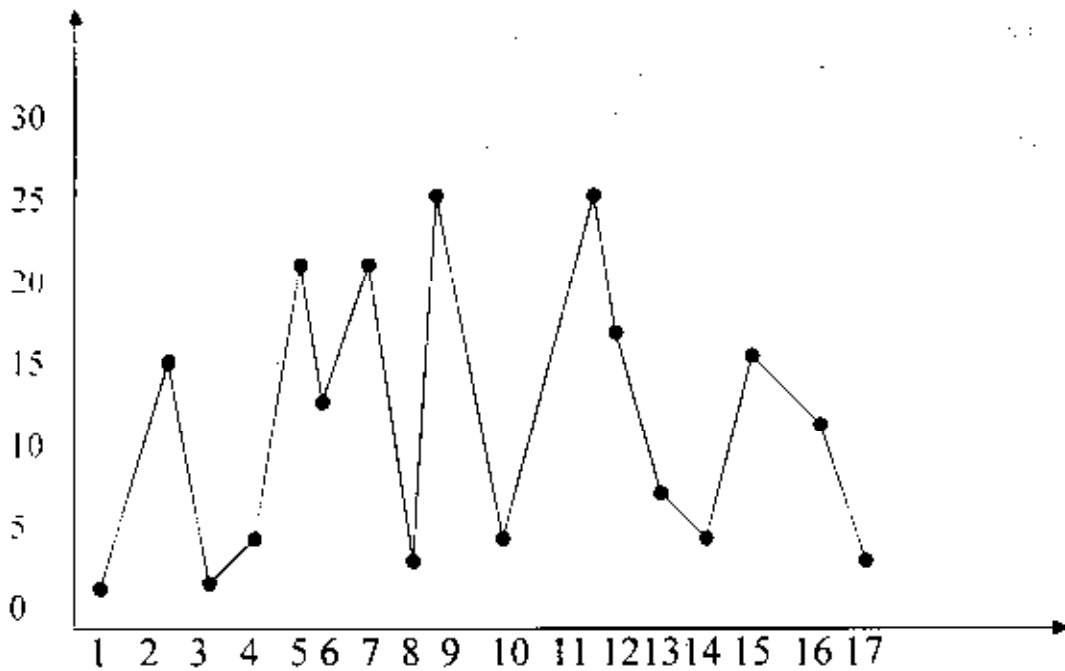


Figure No.(2)

**Neutral Opinions of Students with the Items of the
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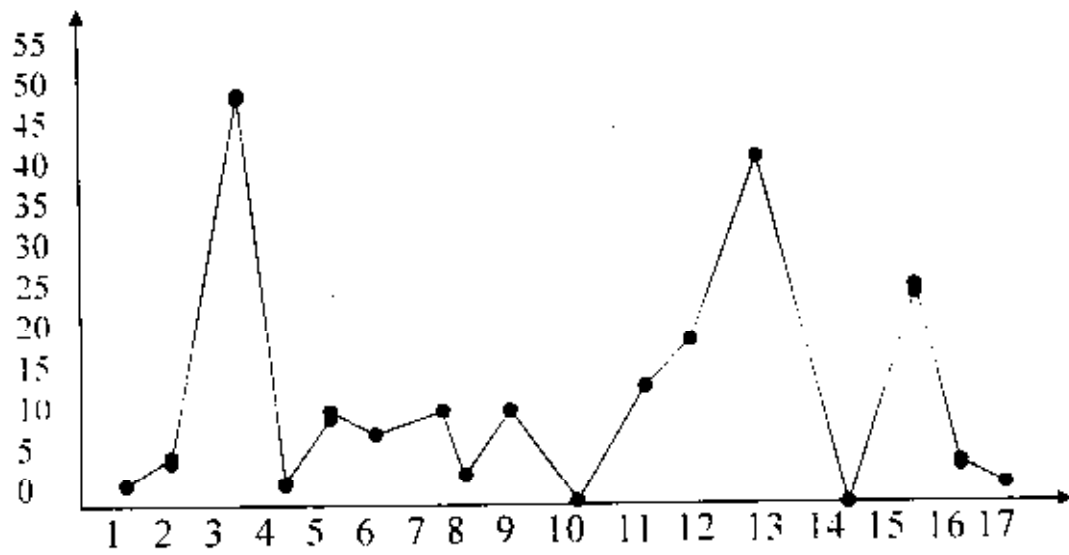


Figure No.(3)
Disagreement of Students with the Items of the Questionnaire

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Data Analysis

Measures of each of the direct attitude questions are given in the tables and figures above. The direct statements which elicited the strongest agreement were : 1. " *studying English can be important for me because it will make me a more knowledgeable person*" . 4. " *studying English can be important for me because I'll need it for my future career*" . 8. " *it is important to use English in textbooks assigned in universities or other institutes of higher education*" . 10. " *studying English can be important for me because it will enable me to better understand and appreciate English art and literature*" . 14. " *I wish I could speak English fluently*" . 17. " *learning English makes it easier to learn the computer*" . "

These results seem to reflect a feeling among the students that studying or learning English is very important in the world today . The statements (mentioned above) relate to the students' appreciation of the use and study of English.

Statement 1. indicates that students consider learning English as an entrance for knowledge . Learning English represents one of the requirements of the developments since it is the first universal language in the world today .

Statements 2. " *I agree with the use of English in schools and on the radio and TV*" . 11. " *I prefer reading newspapers and magazines in English language*" . and 17 . " *learning English makes it easier to learn the computer*" show that using English at schools and mass media can be useful in linking the society with the world because the mass media , computers , and education represent the important widespread features of the civilized world today .

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Statement 3. "*Learning English is a waste of time*" and 4. (mentioned above) show the students' feelings about the educational process. The students put into their consideration the importance of learning English for their future life. The person will have more opportunities for work if he (or she) learns the English language. By checking **Table No. (3)**, we can see that (49) of the students disagree with item 3, while (45) of them agree with item 4, which shows the importance of English language for a future career.

Statement 5. "*English is the mark of an educated person*" states that the students look at English as a language of a civilized society. The dominance of the neutral opinions (22) shows that the students don't consider English language to be the mark of the culture of a person since he may be civilized in his life and behaviour without learning English language.

Statement 6. "*I enjoy meeting and listening to the people speaking English language*" affirms the attitudes of the students towards the English speakers. The desire to meet and interact with the English speakers leads in most cases, to learn the language. It seems from tables (1) and (2) that female students tend more than males to meet and listen to English speakers. This statement has a relation with statement 15. "*The English people is a friendly and good people*" in which the students also disagree with meeting English people and this proves the patriotic feeling of the students.

Statement 7. "*the use of English is one of the most crucial factors which has contributed to the development of Iraq today*" supports points 1 and 5, in that English language represents (in most cases) a language of developed societies.

The agreement of the students with statement 8. (mentioned above) affirms that English is the language of science today since most scientific books, newspapers, periodicals, and etc. are written in the English language.

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Statement 9. " *If I use English , my status is raised "* and 12. " *If I use English , I wil be praised and approved of by my family , relatives, and friends "* assure an unawareness (specially with males) of the prestige value of English and some type of internal resistance to participate in that thinking .It may also indicate an unwillingness to separate oneself from family and friends who may not speak English at all .

The agreement of students with statement 10. (mentioned above) explains that students consider learning English may be of great help to better understand the foreign cultures.

The high disagreement with statement 13. "*when I leave school , I shall give up the study of English completely because I am disinterested in it "* expresses the importance of English language for the future of the students and their urgent need for such language in their future career . This statement can relate to statement 4.

Statement 14. shows the great wish of the students to learn and speak English language and be fluent in such a language.

The high agreement with statement 16. "*my parents really encourage me to study English "* proves the role of parents in motivating and encouraging their children to learn English language.

Conclusions

In any foreign language programme, there are linguistic and non-linguistic goals. The linguistic goals focus on developing the student's ability to read, write, speak, and understand the foreign language. Non-linguistic goals emphasize such aspects as improving understanding of the students' desire to study more about foreign language, etc. Learning any foreign language may happen because a person wants to communicate someday with the people in the

other culture. Others may learn foreign language for instrumental purposes e.g. gaining a reading knowledge within a specific field. Sometimes, a learner wishes to integrate himself within the culture of the foreign language group; to identify himself with and become a part of that society. The attitudes that the learner has toward the foreign language community (a desire to understand them and interact with them) will lead to high motivation to learn that language. Attitude is a factor toward the learner's own native culture and the extent to which he prefers his native country over the country whose language is being learned. When the student likes the education and the teacher, he will accept the teacher as a source of foreign language. Because of the direct relationship between language learning and attitudes toward language, the attitudinal factors represent very important requirement in the educational process.

Sex differences have also obtained a big influence on attitudes toward learning a foreign language. Females tend to have more positive attitude (or willingness) than do males. When the students have positive attitudes, the teacher can perform his/her job the best. A teacher can do a lot to improve the student's attitude, and the effort involved is an essential part of the teaching profession.

Pedagogical Recommendations

The teacher's effort could result in making the students more motivated. If they see (or feel) that the teacher is eager to teach them, then they can learn language by example. Positive attitude is a necessity for making the process of learning a language successful. The teacher should be self-confident, he should encourage positive approval for the student's attempts to learn the foreign language even if a student commits any mistake. The students should feel that the teacher is glad they tried and being wrong isn't such a big problem. Thereby, they will be daring to participate the next time. This will develop a comfortable atmosphere for the students in the classroom.

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Questionnaire

Please answer the following items by writing one of the alternatives below which appears most applicable to you. We would urge you to be as accurate as possible since the success of this investigation depends upon it . Thank you very much for your cooperation .

Information Required

Sex : _____

The place you are living in : _____

Your parents' occupation : _____

The Alternatives :- Agree | Neutral | Disagree

The Items :-

1. Studying English can be important for me because it will make me a more knowledgeable person.
2. I agree with the use of English in schools and on the radio and TV.
3. Learning English is a waste of time.
4. Studying English can be important for me because I'll need it for my future career.
5. English is the mark of an educated person .
6. I enjoy meeting and listening to the people speaking English language .
7. The use of English is one of the most crucial factors which has contributed to the development of Iraq today .
8. It is important to use English in textbooks assigned in universities or other institutions of higher education .
9. If I use English , my status is raised.
10. Studying English can be important for me because it will enable me to better understand and appreciate English art and literature.
11. I prefer reading newspapers and magazines in English langu
12. If I use English , I will be praised and approved of by my family , relatives , and friends.
13. When I leave school , I shall give up the study of English completely because I am disinterested in it.
14. I wish I could speak English fluently.
15. The English people is a friendly and good people.
16. My parents really encourage me to study English.
17. Learning English makes it easier to learn the computer.

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الخلاصة :

تكون الدراسات المتعددة للمواقف حول لغة التي هي اكثر ملاءمة ضمن سياق كلامي معين . وان المواقف من استخدام اللغة الاكثر تلاؤما في أي جمهور من المتكلمين تكون ذات ارتباط كبير بالوضع الاجتماعي المناسب لهذه اللغة . وهناك وراء دراسة اية لغة اجنبية منها : الحصول على نفوذ اجتماعي ، الحصول على عمل ما ، القدرة على السفر ، اكتساب الاطراء الابوي ، التكلم مع الناس من المجتمع الاجنبي ، تحسين مستوى التعليم لدى الفرد المتعلم ، الايقاع بمتطلبات اللغة ، الخ .

تشمل هذه الدراسة جانبين : نظري وعملي . فيما يخص الجانب النظري ، فان الدراسة توضح اهمية اللغة الانكليزية كلغة دولية ، ويتناول فصل اخر مفردة " الموقف " كمصطلح لغوي مع بعض التعاريف المتعلقة بها ، واهميتها في تعليم اللغة الاجنبية . ويتضمن هذا الجزء ايضا " فصلا " حول اهمية المعلم كنموذج لمتعلمي اللغة الاجنبية . كما ويناقش الفصل الاخير من هذا الجزء الدعم والتشجيع الابوي الذي يكون فعلا له الدور المؤثر على مواقف المتعلم نحو تعلم اية لغة اجنبية .

اما الجانب العملي فقد اعد استفتاء حول مواقف طلبة المرحلة الخامسة / المرحلة الاعدادية بشأن تعلم اللغة الانكليزية . وفي الختام يوجد استنتاج من الدراسة الحالية مع بعض التوصيات التدريسية لمدرسي اللغة الانكليزية .