

EFL Students' Attitudes towards Learning English Language: The Case of Libyan Secondary School Students

موقف الطلبة من تعلم اللغة الانجليزية - العينة طلبة الثانوية بليبيا
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ملخص الدراسة :

هذه الدراسة سوف تساعد مدرسين اللغة الانجليزية مكاتب التعليم والجهات ذات الصلة أن يعرفوا الصعوبات المعوقات التي توجد في مدراس الثانوية التي تعيق تعلم اللغة الانجليزية كلغة ثانويه . هذه الدراسة سوف تكون مفيدة للمدرسين والمجتمع من جانب المتعلمين وقدرتهم اللغوية التي تتطور ومخرجاتهم العلمية بالإضافة قدراتهم العقلية . الدراسة الحالية تكسب أهميتها من الحقيقة ان الباحث الذي يدرسها ليعبر عن منطقه المشاكل التي تدل على حقل تدريس اللغة الانجليزية كلغة ثانوية هذه الدراسة مهمه لأنها تستطيع أن تستخدم كأساس للدراسات المستقبلية بالإضافة إلى ذلك هذه النتائج سوف تعطي معلومات للبحوث المستقبلية ليسلطوا الضوء على المناطق التي تطلب اكتشافات إضافية ومعرفة المواضيع التي تحتاج الي اكتشاف أكثر .
الكلمات المفتاحية مواقف وظروف؛ اخطاء النطق؛ الإدراك العقلي؛ المخرجات

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Abstract:

This study will help English language teachers, education officials, and other relevant stakeholders recognize the difficulties and constraints that exist in our secondary schools, which hinder the learning of English as a second language. This study will be useful for both learners and society. From the side of learners, their linguistic capabilities are greatly improved, and their productive output has risen, as well as their cognitive abilities. The

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current study gains its importance from the fact that the researcher addresses it to consider a new problematic area related to the field of teaching English as a foreign language. The study is significant because it can be used as a basis for future studies in this area. Furthermore, these findings will inform future research by highlighting areas that require additional investigation and by indicating topics that warrant further quantitative exploration.

Keywords: attitude, fossilization, cognitive, .output

Introduction:

Language learning is widely recognized as a fundamental aspect of human development and interaction. Acquiring a language enables individuals to articulate their thoughts, aspirations, and even their innermost dreams. Prominent linguists (Crystal, 2007; Ortega, 2009; Sivertzen, 2013; Solutanieh, 2014) have emphasized that the process of acquiring a second language is influenced by a range of factors, including motivation, attitudes, anxiety, learning achievement, aptitude, and the role of the first language, among others.

The statement of the problem

Although numerous studies have examined attitudes toward bilingualism, relatively few have specifically focused on learners at the secondary school level. It is well understood that young learners possess a natural ability to acquire languages with relative ease. However, challenges often arise when language learning occurs in a formal instructional context, where external factors may hinder the natural acquisition process.

The problem of this study is limited to deficiencies in the learning program and discusses ways to develop this program, as well as a lack of interest in culture and the absence of recent programs keeping pace with scientific and technological progress.

Research Questions and Hypothesis

This study is guided by two primary questions:

What are the attitudes of Libyan secondary school teachers and students towards learning English in terms of their behavioral, cognitive, and emotional aspects?

Is there any significant difference in Libyan secondary school teachers' and students' attitudes towards learning the English language by the field of study?

Aims of the study-

There are some objectives achieved in this research:

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- The main goal of this study is for learners must discriminate the sounds of a second language, and knows the grammatical rules of it.
 - This study aims to find out how families assist learners in the home to develop "E" as a second language in comparison to their mother tongue.
 - In addition, this study also focused on the attitudes of parents with
- Literature Review-

This chapter presents a comprehensive review of the existing literature on attitudes toward second language learning, emphasizing the critical role of attitude as a predominant factor influencing success in acquiring a second language. Numerous studies have established that language learners' attitudes significantly affect their motivation, engagement, and overall achievement in language learning.

This part of the study addresses the following questions:

- To what extent do the previous studies help us in understanding this project
- How can a human being learn a second language?
- What are the differences between learning & acquisition?
- Are there any consequences to learning another language?
- What are the factors that affect SLL?

Some fundamental definitions of some terms

1. First Language:

Saville-Troike (2006) defined first language as “the language acquired during early childhood”.

2. Second Language:

Sivertzen (2013) confirmed that “Second language is the language learned after the first language”.

3. Acquisition:

Acquisition is “the process whereby a child naturally masters a language without necessarily learning it in the sense of receiving instructions” (cited in Saville-Troike, 2006).

4-Learning:

Han (2004) described learning as a "conscious process which occurs when the learner's objective is to learn about the language itself, rather than to understand messages which are conveyed through the language.

5-Fossilization:

Han (2004) stated that fossilization is “a lack of change in interlanguage pattern, even after extended exposure to instruction in the target language”.

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6- Bilingualism:

It can be loosely defined as “the use of two languages or the native-like control of two languages” (Soltanieh, 2014).

**** Comparison between Learning & Acquisition**

It is important to refer to the distinction between these two aspects in order to have a precise and correct understanding of them. Here are some of these differences:

Learning	Acquisition
Happened deliberately	Happened accidentally
Explicit	Implicit
Conscious	Subconscious
Formal situations	Informal situations
Uses grammatical rules	Uses grammatical feeling
Depends on aptitude	Depends on attitude

Previous studies:

Based on what has been variously written in the previous literature, previous studies are essential to have a background on how this study was conducted in various areas around the world and to have an eye on which way their learner learn and acquire language.

A study conducted in Nigeria (2014) stated that human beings do not learn a language all at once, but it is made up of overlapping stages.

Another study made in Stavanger (2014) by Soltanieh investigated that the occupational, educational, and immigration reasons led to the expansion of second language learning. To be precise, a human being is exposed to learn another language compulsory to be able to co-exist and communicate with the surrounding setting.

A study was conducted in Norway (2013) by Sivertzen on Norwegian school children aged between 5 to 6 years old, investigating whether the external factors of input and age have an impact on developing the learner's language or not.

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A study which was conducted in Canada (2006) argued that bilingual students produce English language compared to monolingual students in terms of the four skills in learning English language.

*Stages of second language acquisition:

The process of acquiring a first language goes through an arranged stages beginning with babbling to one-word utterances, two-word phrases, full sentences, and eventually complex grammar (Ortega, 2009).

On the contrary, Clarke (2007) confirmed that it is not the same thing as acquiring SL. Learners of English as a second language are likely to develop through the following stages:

1-Continued use of the home language in the new language context.

2-Use of non-verbal communication.

3-Becoming familiar with English.

Stages of acquiring a first language:

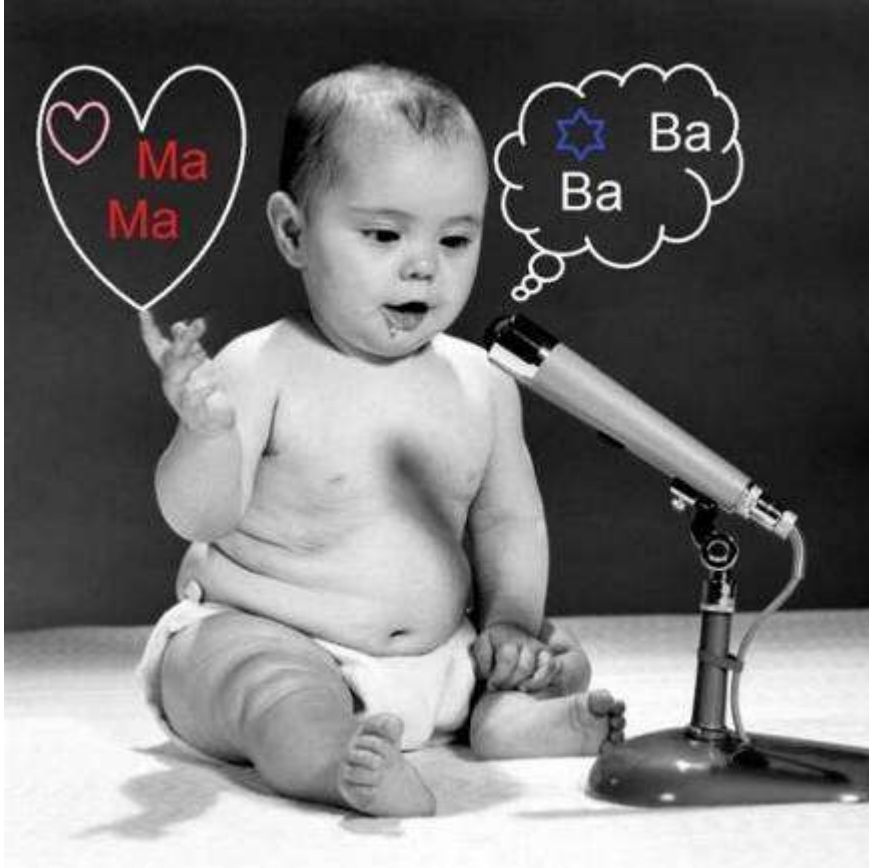
1-Babbling or cooing stage, (3-9 months):

The first stage of language development is known as "Pre-linguistics ", the babbling or cooing stage. During which an infant appears to produce vowel sounds like: 'aaaaaa & oooooo', but not yet produce any recognized words.

By five months, infants are

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babbling.



2-One-word utterance (12-18 months):

It is the second phase after babbling known as "Linguistic stage". Children can formulate one meaningful word at this juncture, such as "milk", "car", "cup".

Crystal (2007) recommended that when children make their first word, naturally, they commit pronunciation errors in learning vowels and consonants, for instance, avoiding consonant clusters e.g. 'fly' pronounced {fai}, replacing fricative by stops e.g. 'see' pronounced {ti:} and dropping unstressed syllables, e.g. 'banana' pronounced {nana}.

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3-Two-words stage (18 months):

The process of producing one-word utterances is in progress towards getting two-word utterances, which is named as "Telegraphic stage". Adam can form grammatically 2 correct words, containing mostly nouns and verbs, which follow.

The rules of syntax. The two-word phrase examples could be as follows:

*"Doggy big " (declarative) *"Where ball" (interrogative)

*"Not egg" (negative) *"More sugar" (imperative)

Zaharadnikova (2011) provided that among the other common occurrences appearing in a child's language are overextensions and underextensions.

4- Full-sentence stage (28-42 months):

During this period, children can form sentences that consist of a subject and a predicate. The previous examples could now be the following:

"Doggy is big." "Where is the ball?"

"That is not an egg." "I want more sugar."

5-Complex grammatical structures stage (42 months +):

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At this time, children use more elaborate and complex grammatical structures. Conjunctions, prepositions, embedded clauses, and permuted within sentences are used.

B- Stages of second language Learning (SLA):

1-Continued use of the home language in the new language context:

Ortega (2009) stated that at the beginning of learning English as a second language, some learners resort to using their home language.

If the surrounding zone has presented a negative attitude.

2-Use of non-verbal communication:

Usually, learners cannot use a language that they have little exposure to or chances to practice. So, they depend on non-verbal responses in which they remain silent or unwilling to use English in the early days of transition to school, avoiding effective interaction as well as using gestures to respond.

3- Becoming familiar with English:

At this stage, learners are in progress to understand familiar English and take part in the process. Although they are still reliant on non-verbal communication.

(Ortega, 2009)

Theories of second language acquisition:

The most prominent theories:

Behaviorism theory.

Social cognitive theory.

Social interactionism theory

1- Behaviorism Theory:

According to many linguists, namely (Skinner:2011, Chomsky, 2012), who support this theory, the behaviorists believe that this theory emphasizes the role of internal mental processes and the role of external behavior. It aims to interpret two aspects of learning:

How to establish knowledge.

How a knowledge become automatic?

Piaget (2000) is one of the supporters of the view that language is built on cognitive development.

Language development coincides with mental development, which affects each other. Moreover, language as a function creative process depends on the individual's ability to represent environmental experiences. (cited in Zahradnikova, 2011)

3-Nativist Theory:

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Chomsky, Samson, and Brown are the best known for this theory. They believed that language acquisition is achieved by the social environment, and that the child's mind is a pure blank slate that receives formulas and phrases. Language is the store that the children turn to when it is necessary in order to choose words and expressions.

The first team believed that there was no mechanism to learn the language, but there are general principles that are not specific to language alone, but can be used in other learning styles.

The second team assumed that there were special theories related to learn the language, and there are specific private foundations that control language learning, which have no relationship with any other knowledge. According to this theory:

1-Man is the only creature that can learn language.

2- The human mind is provided with capabilities to learn language, which is called the language acquisition device (LAD). In other words, Children are born with the instinct to learn language, and this innate capacity exists among all members of the human species. Performance is. Additionally, the goal of linguistic study is to know the language proficiency (Language competence) in practical reality. Learners can access these rules and foundations through external, obvious speech. (Ortega, 2009)

4-Critical period hypothesis:

This hypothesis revolved around the ability to acquire language age-linked, from a biological point of view. It says that there is a critical specific period to acquire language in environments that are linguistically rich. After this period, it becomes more difficult to acquire language.

The duration of this period differ greatly under different considerations. However, under certain conditions, which are similar to the original worded note where these observations suggest that the tone is influenced by multiple factors, such as the identity and motives, rather than by the biological critical period. (Troike, 2006)

2.6. The role of the first language in child L2

Using a second language in the foreign language classroom needs to be maximized wherever possible, by encouraging its use and by using it for classroom management. However, research shows that the first language has a small but important role to play in communicating ideas, thoughts, meaning, and content. This role can be positive or negative.

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Positive Attitude	Negative Attitude
Learning L2 produces enrichment1-	Learning L2 causes resentment.
Speeds up the learning process2-	Slows down the learning process
Trustworthiness3 -	Skepticism
Approval4 -	Rejection
Acceptance5-	Refusal

Methodology

This chapter outlines the research methodology employed to conduct the study. To effectively address the research objectives, a mixed-methods approach combining both qualitative and quantitative techniques was adopted. This approach facilitated a comprehensive investigation into the challenges faced by secondary school students in learning English at Al-Khansa School in Zliten.

To address the first research question, descriptive statistical analysis was carried out to calculate the frequency, mean, variance, and standard deviation of the collected data. Additionally, an independent samples t-test was employed to answer the second research question, enabling a comparison between relevant groups.

Furthermore, semi-structured interviews were conducted with a sample of English language teachers. Following the interviews, six of these teachers were selected for classroom observation to gain further insights into their teaching practices and the learning environment.

*The Participants

The target sample population comprises only female teachers randomly selected (4) secondary school teachers. They are varied in age, Field of teaching, and years of experience. All of the participating teachers teach students of different specializations, other than English specialization students. All had been educated to a Bachelor's level of education. Their teaching experience ranged from (1) to (8). They are employed at Alkhansa Primary and Secondary School in the center of Zliten.

Research Tools

This study employed a combination of qualitative and quantitative research tools to enhance the validity and reliability of the findings. To ensure

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methodological rigor, the researcher implemented a series of well-structured research procedures, integrating both types of data collection methods to provide a comprehensive understanding of the research problem:

Semi-structured Interviews

A semi-structured interview is an investigative research instrument that is most commonly associated with qualitative research. Unlike structured interviews, which contain a structured fixed sequence of questions to be asked in the same way to all interviewees.

Face-to-face, semi-structured interviews are conducted to understand the difficulties encountered by Libyan Secondary school teachers in teaching "E" as a second language. Only the participants selected for the study were interviewed. Each interview lasted between 20 and 30 minutes and was conducted within the premises of the participants' respective schools. The primary aim of these interviews was to provide the researcher with a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by both teachers and students in learning English as a second language (SL) within an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context.

***Observation of the classroom Procedure**

As indicated approach gives primary importance to the use or function of the language and secondary importance to its structure or form.

Classroom Observations at Al-Khansa School

The observed classroom activities at Al-Khansa School included a variety of communicative tasks such as information gap activities, giving and following directions, problem-solving, using contextual clues, as well as engaging in conversations, dialogues, role-plays, and debates. These activities are intended to promote spontaneous speech, rather than rote memorization, as spontaneity is a fundamental characteristic of authentic communication.

In practice, however, instruction was often teacher-centered, with the teacher positioned at the front of the classroom delivering content directly from the prescribed textbook. Arabic was frequently used to explain grammatical concepts and to clarify the meanings of English texts. Students were commonly required to translate English sentences into Arabic, which limited opportunities for active language use.

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It is important to note that the communicative approach should not be confined to speaking skills alone; reading and writing must also be developed to build learners' confidence across all four language skills.

Additionally, pair and group work emerged as effective instructional strategies, particularly in smaller class settings. These collaborative formats allowed students to exchange and negotiate meaning in scenarios where individuals possessed different pieces of information, thereby fostering meaningful interaction.

Pre and post-test:

The pre-test is taken as a sample of the total marks of Alkhansa school teachers in mid exams in order to see the degree of development in the level of students in different years.

* Data collection

Data collection takes place over a period of two months. We have collected data by conducting observations and semi-structured interviews, as well as tests. Six classrooms were observed, and they were carried out for 130 participants in order to capture in detail if any of the participants faced any difficulties in learning a second language.

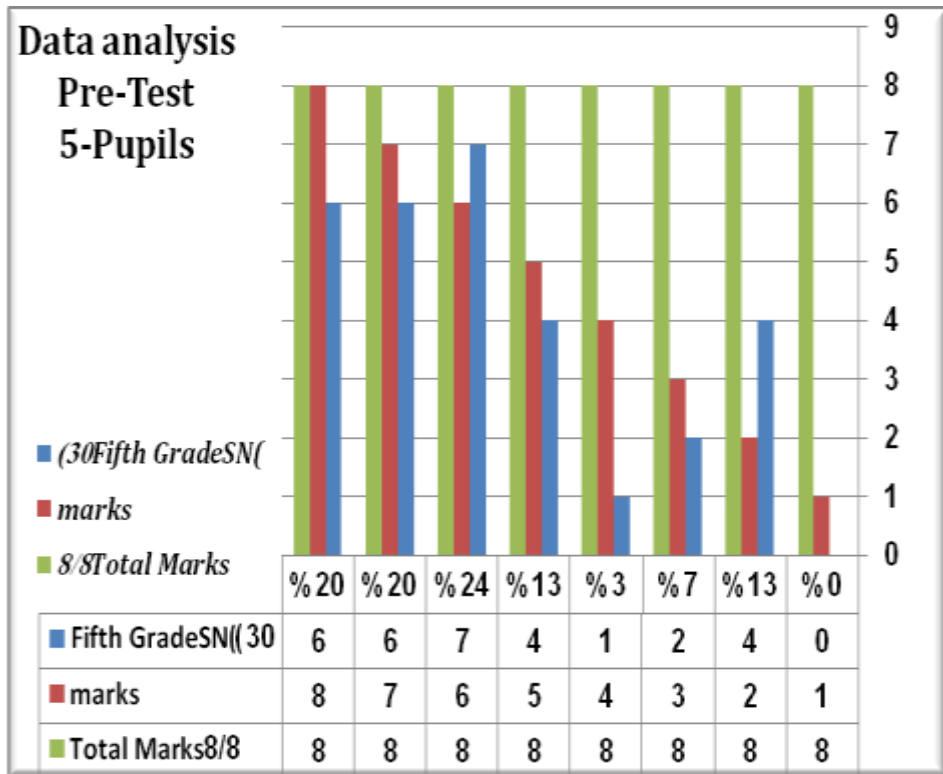
*Data analysis

The collected data are analyzed on the basis of the open-ended question responses that are designed for the teachers in the interview. Also, the data are analyzed on the basis of the students' responses in the test.

Data analysis Pre-test primary Students -

Fifth Grade	Total mark	Percentage
Total Number of Students (30)		
0	8	0%
4	8	13%
2	8	7%
1	8	3%
4	8	13%
7	8	24%
6	8	20%
6	8	20%

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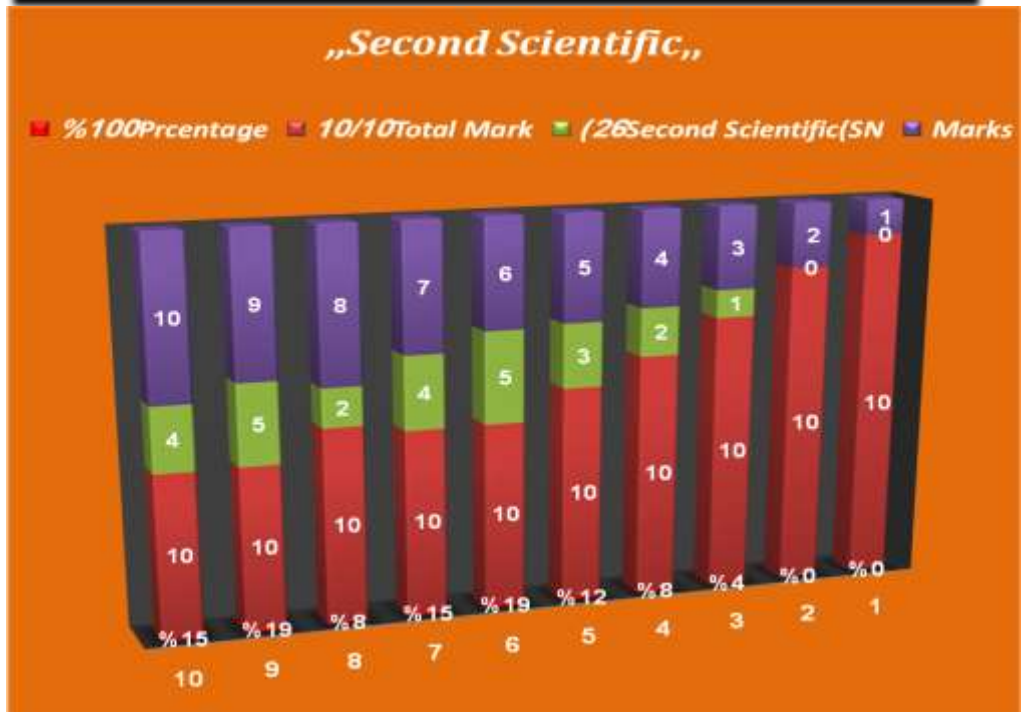
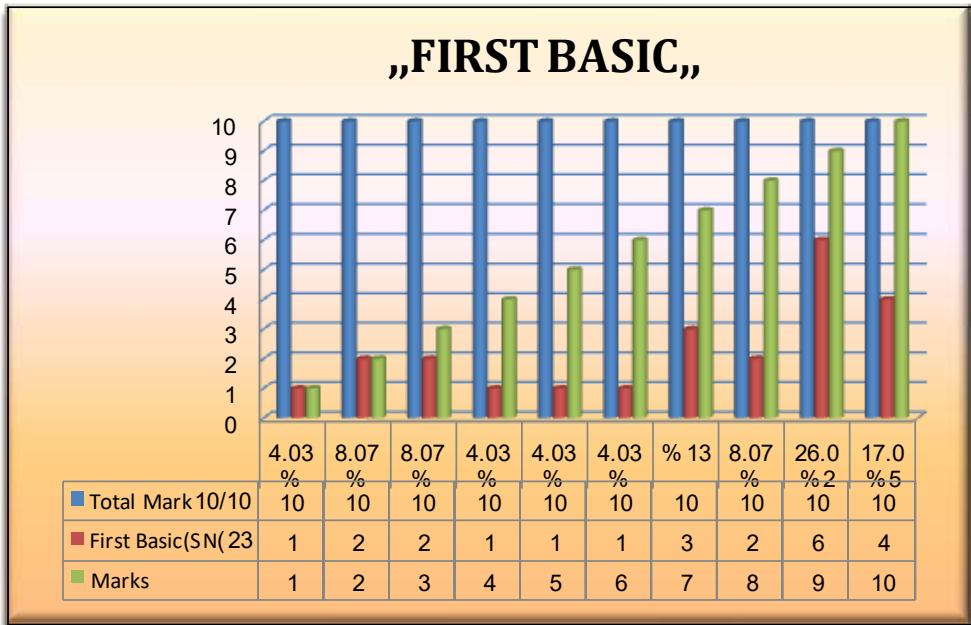


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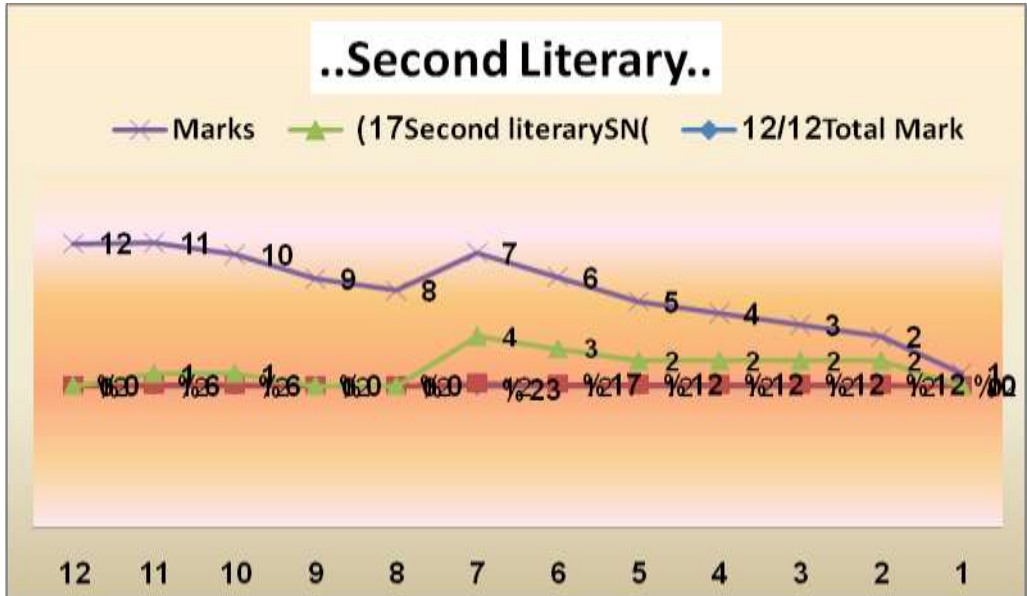
Data analysis
Pre-Test

Marks	First Basic(23)		Second Scientific(26)		Second Art(17)		Third Scientific(22)		Third Art(16)	
	T(10)	Per	T(10)	Per	T(12)	Per	T(13)	Per	T(16)	Per
	SN		SN		SN		SN		SN	
1	1	%4.3		0%		0%		0%		0%
2	2	%8.7		0%	2	12%	1	4%		0%
3	2	%8.7	1	4%	2	12%		0%		0%
4	1	%4.3	2	8%	2	12%	2	9%		0%
5	1	%4.3	3	12%	2	12%		0%		0%
6	1	%4.3	5	19%	3	17%		0%	2	12.5%
7	3	%13	4	15%	4	23%	1	4%		0%
8	2	%8.7	2	8%	0	0%	1	4%		0%
9	6	%26.2	5	19%	0	0%	2	9%		0%
10	4	%17.5	4	15%	1	6%	2	9%	1	6.25%
11					1	6%	2	9%	3	18.75%
12						0%	3	15%	3	18.75%
13							8	37%	1	6.25%
14										0%
15									2	12.5%
16									4	25%

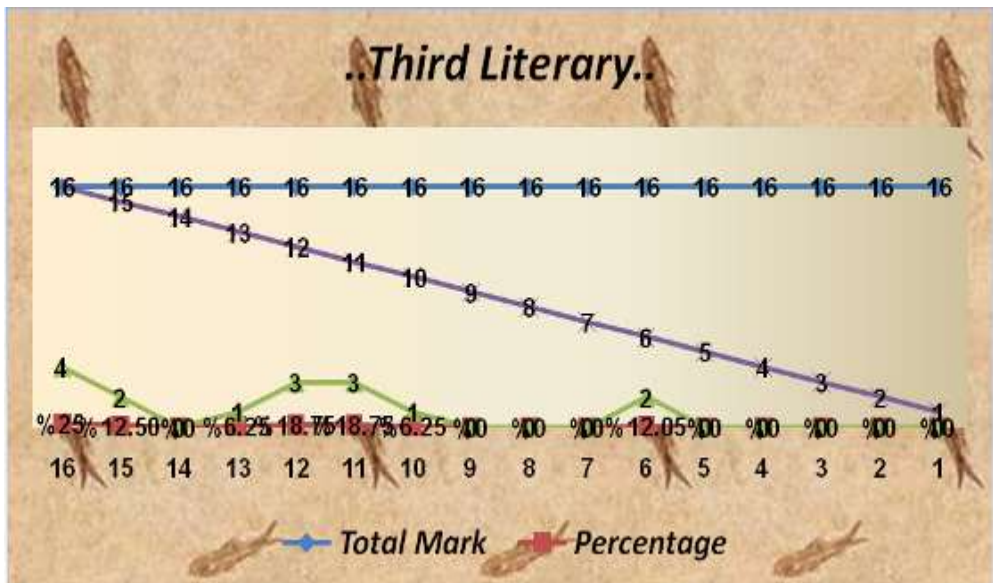
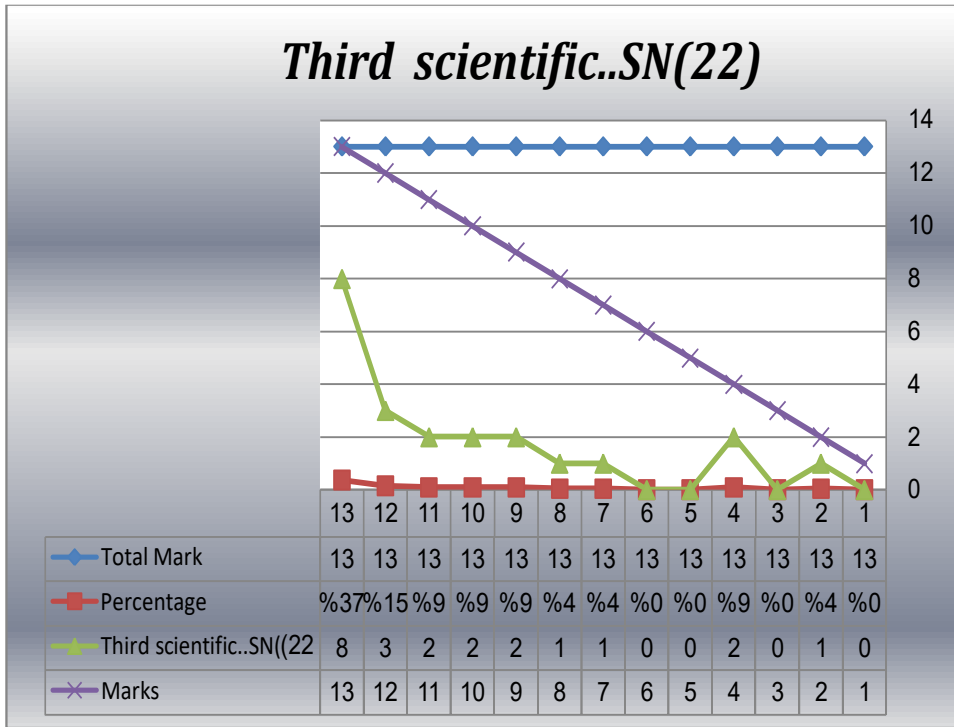
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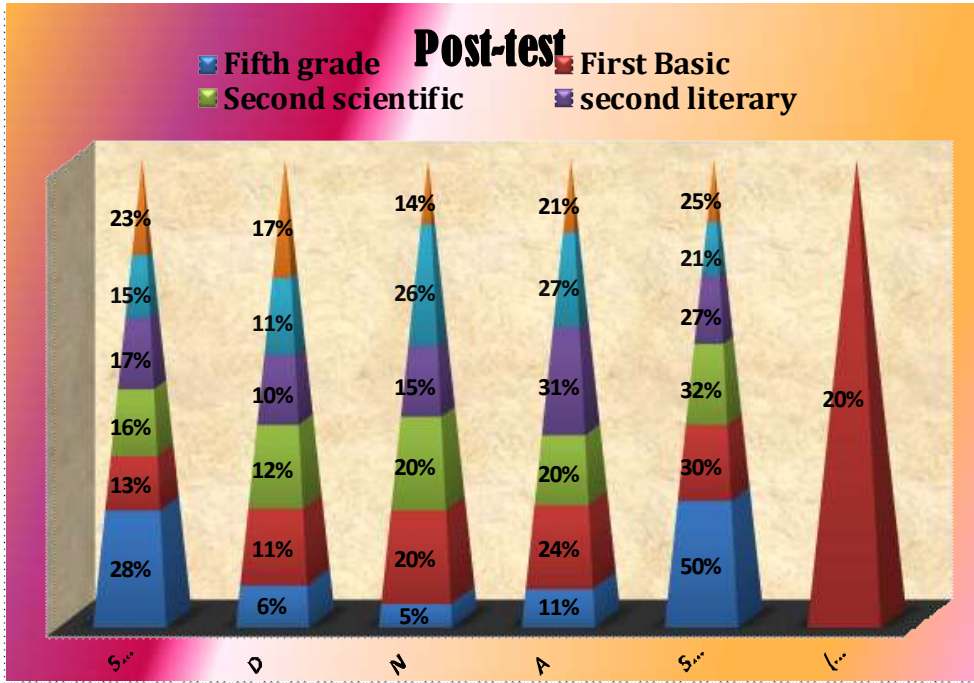


Data Analysis: Post-test

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Responses	Fist Basic	Second Scientific	Second Art	Third Scientific	Third Art	Fifth grade
SD	13%	%16	17%	15%	23%	%28
D	11%	12%	10%	11%	17%	%6
N	20%	20%	15%	26%	14%	5%
A	24%	20%	31%	27%	21%	11%
SA	30%	32%	27%	21%	25%	50%

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Conclusion

The findings of this research are in harmony with other studies conducted in as outlined previously. There are some plausible facts that arise from the findings.

4.1. The findings:

With regard to the first research question concerning students' attitudes toward learning the English language, the results of the descriptive analysis indicate that the overall mean score reflects a generally negative attitude, with some specific areas showing positive responses. This suggests that, while participants may exhibit isolated positive views, their overall perception of learning English remains unfavorable.

Furthermore, the mean scores across the three measured dimensions of attitude toward English varied among participants. These findings are consistent with previous studies, which also reported predominantly negative attitudes toward English language learning. It has been suggested that such negativity may stem from the instructional approaches employed,

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particularly the reliance on traditional and teacher-centered methods by some English language instructors.

The factors behind a negative attitude:

- 1- The lack of an English environment.
- 2-The insufficient syllabus.
- 3-The incompetent teachers.

Classroom instructions.

4.2. Recommendation:

In light of the observed negative attitudes toward learning English, the following recommendations are proposed for EFL teachers:

Foster a Positive Learning Environment: Teachers should strive to create a supportive and motivating classroom atmosphere that encourages students to develop more favorable attitudes toward English language learning.

Enhance Student Motivation: It is essential to emphasize the practical value and global importance of the English language. Teachers can achieve this by adopting effective, student-centered teaching strategies and engaging instructional activities tailored to learners' interests and needs.

Utilize Diverse and Modern Teaching Resources: In addition to the prescribed textbooks, teachers are encouraged to incorporate up-to-date materials and supplementary resources that reflect real-life language use and promote communicative competence

Summary

The respondents' negative attitudes toward the English language suggest a limited awareness of its importance, with many students perceiving it merely as a compulsory subject. In brief, attitude is recognized as a critical factor in the process of language learning. Therefore, fostering a positive attitude should serve as the foundation for effective language acquisition. EFL teachers are encouraged to consider and respect students' emotions, beliefs, and behavioral tendencies, giving them due attention alongside cognitive development in the learning process.

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