



A Survey Of Elementary School Students' Attitudes Towards English Language Learning In Manipur

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the attitudes of elementary school students in Manipur towards English language learning. The purposes of the present investigation were to identify the factors associated with students' attitudes towards learning English and the perceived challenges faced by them while learning English, to investigate the differences in students' attitudes towards learning English based on demographic variables such as age, gender, and socio-economic background, and lastly to identify students' preferences for improving English language learning in their schools. The sample consists of 200 students from various elementary schools in the region. A questionnaire was designed to assess students' attitudes toward learning English, including their motivation, interest, perceived usefulness, and enjoyment of the language. The study employed a cross-sectional survey design and quantitative data analysis techniques such as frequencies, percentages, and Chi-Square tests were used to analyze the data and examine the relationships between variables. The results indicate that the majority of students have a positive attitude towards learning English, with many expressing high levels of motivation and enjoyment. However, some students also reported feeling anxious or lacking confidence in their English abilities. The findings have implications for language teaching practices in Manipur and highlight the importance of addressing students' attitudes and emotions towards language learning.

Keywords: Elementary School Students, Attitudes, English Language Learning, Feelings, Motivations.

1. Introduction

The learning of the English language among elementary school students in Manipur holds significant importance in the context of the state's diverse linguistic and cultural landscape. English, as a global language, plays a crucial role in facilitating communication, accessing information, and expanding educational and professional opportunities. Understanding the attitudes of elementary school students towards learning English in Manipur is essential for teachers and policymakers to tailor effective language learning strategies that align with students' perceptions and motivations. This study aims to explore the attitudes of elementary school students in Manipur towards learning English. By examining students' beliefs, motivations, and perceptions towards English language learning, this research seeks to provide insights into the factors influencing students' attitudes and the implications for language teaching practices. The findings of this study can contribute to the development of more effective English language teaching methodologies and curriculum design that cater to the needs and interests of elementary school students in Manipur.

1.1 Literature Review

Attitudes can be seen as automatic associations between an object and its evaluation, which can be either spontaneous and uncontrollable or controlled and reflective (Hill, 1994). Alternatively, attitudes can be considered as bindings of perceptual features of an object to affective codes, forming "event files" that may involve the migration of affective codes between different files (Hommel & Stevenson, 2021). Attitudes in English language learning encompass cognitive, behavioral, and emotional aspects. Students' attitudes play a crucial role in their success in language acquisition. Research indicates that positive attitudes toward English

are prevalent among students (Yuliani, Najmiah, Hamdani, & Pratolo, 2023; Zulfikar, Dahliana, & Sari, 2019; Lizawati, 2019; Laili & Herwiana, 2019). These attitudes are reflected in students' beliefs, feelings, and behaviours towards learning English. Positive attitudes are associated with increased motivation and achievement in language learning (Cao, 2022). However, despite positive attitudes, some students may struggle with competence in English acquisition. Understanding students' attitudes towards English is essential for teachers to tailor effective teaching strategies and curricula to enhance language learning outcomes. Elementary school students' attitudes towards English language learning vary based on different factors. Research indicates that most young learners have a positive attitude towards learning English (Hue & Tuyen, 2023). However, the use of online games like Free Fire can influence students' language attitudes, leading to changes in language choices and behaviors (Hamila & Rustan, 2023). Additionally, incorporating short stories in teaching can enhance vocabulary development and engage students in learning English (Ledy, Sujarwati, & Syafryadin, 2023). While many students show a positive attitude towards English, there are concerns about their competence in acquiring the language (Laili & Herwiana, 2019). Overall, primary students generally demonstrate a moderate attitude towards English as a Foreign Language, indicating the need for further studies to enhance the quality of EFL classes in primary schools (Pradipta & Artini, 2020).

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The study aims to investigate the attitudes of elementary school students in Manipur towards learning the English language. In particular, the study seeks to concentrate on the following questions:

1. What factors are associated with students' attitudes towards learning English in Manipur?
2. What are the challenges faced by the students while learning English?
3. Is there a difference in students' attitudes towards learning English based on gender?
4. What are the students' suggestions for improving English language teaching in their schools?

By exploring these questions, this study seeks to provide a comprehensive understanding of elementary school students' attitudes toward learning English in Manipur, which can inform the development of more effective English language teaching strategies and curriculum design.

1.3 Objectives

1. To identify the factors associated with students' attitudes towards learning English in Manipur.
2. To identify the perceived challenges faced by the students while learning English.
3. To investigate the differences in students' attitudes towards learning English based on gender.
4. To identify students' preferences for improving English language learning in their schools.

2. Materials and Methods

2.1 Study design and data collection protocol:

The study employed a cross-sectional survey design involving 200 government elementary school students from various government schools in Imphal West, Imphal East, Thoubal, and Bishnupur Districts of Manipur. The authors used a self-developed questionnaire for data collection. The questionnaire includes items related to students' beliefs about the importance of English, their motivation to learn the language, and their perceptions of their own English language proficiency. A separate form was also used to collect demographic information such as age, gender, grade level, and socio-economic background of the participants. Data collection was done from June to October 2023. Before data collection, permission was obtained from the school authorities to conduct the study in selected schools. The questionnaire and demographic information sheet were administered to the participants during school hours. The participants were given clear instructions on how to complete the questionnaire.

2.2 Data Analysis and Statistical Techniques:

Quantitative data analysis techniques such as frequencies, percentages, and Chi-Square tests were used to analyze the data and examine the relationships between variables. The data collected was analyzed using statistical software such as Microsoft Excel and IBM SPSS Version 22.

2.3 Ethical Considerations:

Ethical guidelines were followed throughout the study, ensuring confidentiality and voluntary participation of the participants. The investigators also obtained informed consent from the participants and their guardians.

3. Results and Discussions

3.1 The factors associated with students' attitudes towards learning English

The study identifies several factors associated with students' attitudes towards learning English. The factors included feelings about learning English, motivations for learning English, enjoyment of learning English, and confidence in speaking English. A series of chi-square analyses were conducted to examine the association between factors such as feelings about learning English, motivations for learning English,

enjoyment of learning English, and confidence in speaking English and students' attitudes towards learning English.

Table 1: How do you feel about learning English?

Feelings about Learning English	Frequency (%)
a. Very excited	60 (30%)
b. Somewhat excited	80 (40%)
c. Neutral	30 (15%)
d. Somewhat hesitant	20 (10%)
e. Very hesitant	10 (5%)
Total	200 (100%)

Feelings about Learning English: The Chi-square analysis results revealed a significant association between how students feel about learning English and their attitudes towards it, $\chi^2 (4) = 120.0, p < .001$. The null hypothesis was rejected. It was concluded that there is a significant association between how students feel about learning English and their attitudes.

Table 2: What motivates you to learn English?

Motivation for learning English	Frequency (%)
a. To communicate with people from other places	75 (37.5%)
b. To watch English movies and TV shows	13 (6.5%)
c. To read English books and magazines	10 (5%)
d. To improve job prospects in the future	82 (41%)
e. Other	20 (10%)
Total	200 (100%)

Motivations for Learning English: Chi-square analysis results indicated a significant association between what motivates students to learn English and their attitudes towards it, $\chi^2 (4) = 116.8, p < .001$. The null hypothesis was rejected. So, it was concluded that there is a significant association between what motivates students to learn English and their attitudes.

Table 3: How enjoyable do you find learning English?

Enjoyment of Learning English	Frequency (%)
a. Very enjoyable	160 (80%)
b. Enjoyable	26 (13%)
c. Neutral	10 (5%)
d. Not very enjoyable	3 (1.5%)
e. Not enjoyable at all	1 (0.5%)
Total	200 (100%)

Enjoyment of Learning English: Chi-square results demonstrated a significant association between how enjoyable students find learning English and their attitudes towards it, $\chi^2 (4) = 333.2, p < .001$. The null hypothesis was rejected. It was concluded that there is a significant association between how enjoyable students find learning English and their attitudes.

Table 4: How confident do you feel about speaking English?

Confidence in Speaking English	Frequency (%)
a. Very confident	120 (60%)
b. Confident	45 (22.5%)
c. Neutral	20 (10%)
d. Not very confident	5 (2.5%)
e. Not confident at all	10 (5%)
Total	200 (100%)

Confidence in Speaking English: Chi-square analysis results showed a significant association between how confident students feel about speaking English and their attitudes towards it, $\chi^2 (4) = 118.0, p < .001$. The null hypothesis was rejected. There is a significant association between how confident students feel about speaking English and their attitudes.

Overall, these findings suggest that factors such as feelings, motivations, enjoyment, and confidence play a significant role in shaping students' attitudes toward learning English. Prior studies showed that a positive learning environment, intrinsic motivation, and personal goals impact students' attitudes and motivation toward English (Nasir, Khan, Nadir, & Bashir, 2023; Demirbulak & Zeyrek, 2022). Additionally, students' attitudes are influenced by their previous experiences, beliefs, and social aspects related to English learning (Sánchez, 2021). While many students exhibit a positive attitude toward English, there may be a disparity between attitude and actual competence in acquiring the language (Herwiana & Laili, 2021). Furthermore, students' attitudes and personality traits have a notable influence on their English learning achievements, as

attitudes shape behavior and responses to learning, while personality traits also play a role in the academic success (Dewi, 2021). These findings emphasize the importance of addressing motivational factors to enhance students' attitudes and proficiency in learning English.

3.2 Challenges in Learning English and Family's Attitude towards English

The study identifies the challenges and family's attitudes in learning English. The challenges included lack of resources, lack of English-speaking environment, difficulty understanding grammar and vocabulary, lack of motivation, and others.

Table 5: What do you think are the biggest challenges in learning English?

Challenges in Learning English	Frequency (%)
a. Lack of resources	30 (15%)
b. Lack of English-speaking environment	70 (35%)
c. Difficulty understanding grammar and vocab.	70 (35%)
d. Lack of motivation	20 (10%)
e. Other	10 (5%)
total	200 (100%)

Biggest Challenges in Learning English: Chi-square analysis results indicated a significant association between the perceived biggest challenges in learning English and students' attitudes, $\chi^2 (4) = 76.8$, p -value < 0.001. The null hypothesis was rejected. It was concluded that there is a significant association between the perceived biggest challenges in learning English and students' attitudes.

Table 6: How does your family's attitude towards English affect your own attitude?

Family's attitude towards English	Frequency (%)
a. Encourage to learn English	95 (47.5%)
b. Discourage from learning English	4 (2%)
c. No effect	71 (35.5%)
d. Not sure	30 (15%)
total	200 (100%)

Family's Attitude towards English: Chi-square statistic: $\chi^2 (3) = 101.5$, p -value < 0.001. The null hypothesis was rejected. It was inferred that there was a significant association between students' perceptions of their family's attitude towards English and their own attitudes.

Overall, the current research results suggest that both the perceived biggest challenges in learning English and the perceived impact of family attitudes towards English have a significant association with students' attitudes towards learning English. Prior studies indicated that perceived challenges in learning English, such as lack of interest, family background, and teaching quality (Prameswari & Astutik, 2023; Park, 2022; Jabeen, 2023), significantly influence elementary students' attitudes towards English. Family attitudes towards English play a crucial role in students' language development (Herwiana & Laili, 2021). The involvement and commitment of parents positively impact the success rate of learning English (Philominraj, Ranjan, Saavedra, & Urzúa, 2022). Challenges like poor teaching technology, geographical barriers, and family perceptions can hinder students' motivation and attitude towards learning English. Despite having a positive attitude towards English, students may still struggle with competence in acquiring the language. Addressing these challenges and fostering a supportive family environment are essential for enhancing elementary students' attitudes and proficiency in learning English.

3.3 Gender Differences in English Language Skills, English Use Outside of School, and Perceptions of learning English

The study finds differences in English Language Skills, English Use Outside of School, and Perceptions about learning English. A chi-square analysis was conducted to examine gender differences in English language skills, frequency of English use outside of school, and perceptions about learning English.

Table 7: How would you rate your English language skills?

English Language Skills	Male	Female	Total
a. Excellent	12 (10.81)	13 (14.61)	25 (12.5)
b. Good	25 (22.52)	20 (22.47)	45 (22.5)
c. Average	69 (62.16)	50 (56.18)	119 (59.5)
d. Below average	2 (1.80)	4 (4.49)	6 (3)
e. Poor	3 (2.70)	2 (2.25)	5 (2.5)
total	111 (100)	89 (100)	200 (100)

Note: Figures in the parentheses indicate percentages

English Language Skills: Chi-square analysis results indicated that there was a significant association between gender and self-rated English language skills, $\chi^2 (4) = 15.09$, $p = 0.004$. The null hypothesis was

rejected. It was inferred that there was a significant association between gender and self-rated English language skills

Table 8: How often do you use English outside of school?

English Use Outside of School	Male	Female	Total
a. Very often	10 (9.01)	12(13.48)	22(11)
b. Often	27(24.32)	21(23.60)	48(24)
c. Sometimes	70(63.06)	49(55.06)	119(59.5)
d. Rarely	2(1.80)	4(4.49)	6(3)
e. Never	2(1.80)	3(3.37)	5(2.5)
Total	111(100)	89(100)	200(100)

Note: Figures in the parentheses indicate percentages

English Use Outside of School: Chi-square analysis results indicated that there was no significant association between gender and frequency of English use outside of school, $\chi^2 (4) = 5.48$, $p = 0.241$. The null hypothesis was retained. It was concluded that there was no significant association between gender and frequency of English use outside of school

Table 9: Do you think boys and girls have different opinions about learning English and how?

Perceptions about learning English	Male	Female	Total
a. Boys are more interested	45(40.54)	1(1.12)	46(23)
b. Girls are more interested	4(3.60)	40(44.94)	44(22)
c. No difference	44(39.64)	29(32.58)	73(36.5)
d. Not sure	18(16.22)	19(21.35)	37 (18.5)
Total	111(100)	89(100)	200(100)

Note: Figures in the parentheses indicate percentages

Perceptions about learning English among boys and girls: Chi-square analysis results indicated that there was a significant association between gender and perceptions of different attitudes towards learning English, $\chi^2 (3) = 62.19$, $p < 0.001$. The null hypothesis was rejected. It was concluded that there was a significant association between gender and perceptions of different attitudes towards learning English.

Overall, the current research results suggest that while gender differences exist in self-rated English language skills and perceptions of different attitudes towards learning English, there is no significant difference in the frequency of English use outside of school based on gender. Prior studies also indicated that gender differences in self-rated English language skills and attitudes towards learning English vary. Studies revealed that females generally outperform males in English language skills and have higher motivation and attitudes towards learning English (AlJuhani, 2023; nurlindawati, Yasin, & Hadi, 2022; Sabiq, Arwi, Khusna, Adifia, & Nada, 2021). However, when it comes to the frequency of English use outside of school, there is no significant difference between male and female students (Muftah, 2022). While males may exhibit higher levels of anxiety related to English learning (Du, 2023), both genders generally show moderately high attitudes and motivation towards English, with females often scoring higher on surveys.

3.4: Student preferences for improving English language learning in their schools

A chi-square analysis was conducted to examine student preferences for improving English language teaching in their school. The analysis was based on data collected from a sample of 200 students.

Table 10: How do you think English language learning could be improved in your school?

Student preferences for improving English language learning	Frequency
a. More interactive activities	72(36)
b. Better textbooks and materials	22(11)
c. More English-speaking practice	88(44)
d. Other	18(9)
total	200(100)

Note: Figures in the parentheses indicate percentages

The current research results indicated a significant association between students' opinions on how English language learning could be improved in their school and the different options provided, $\chi^2 (3) = 94.0$, $p < 0.001$. The null hypothesis was rejected. It was concluded that there was a significant association between students' opinions on how English language learning could be improved in their school and the different options provided such as more interactive activities, better textbooks and materials, more English-speaking practice, and other e.g., provisions of guest lectures and providing certified English teachers, etc. In particular, 44% of the students preferred more English-speaking practice as the primary improvement in English language learning followed by more interactive activities (36%), and better textbooks and materials (11%). 9% of the students also preferred other improvements not included in the provided options such as provisions of guest lectures and providing certified English teachers.

The students' preference for English-speaking practice and interactive activities aligns with the findings from a study on primary school English teachers' perceptions and practices regarding lesson study, emphasizing the importance of collaborative work and competence improvement in teaching practices (Mengistu, Worku, & Melesse, 2023; Copland, Garton, & Barnett, 2022). The finding of the students' preferences for other improvements not included in the provided options such as provisions of guest lectures and providing certified English teachers also aligns with the findings of the prior studies indicating a desire for diverse learning experiences beyond traditional methods (Sinambela, Siregar, & Pakpahan, 2023). The diverse suggestions from students indicate a multifaceted approach to enhancing English language learning, incorporating various strategies beyond traditional methods.

4. Conclusions

The study revealed significant insights into government elementary school students' attitudes towards English language learning in Manipur. Students generally displayed positive attitudes towards learning English, with a majority expressing excitement or enjoyment. Motivations for learning English varied, with communication, media consumption, and future job prospects being key factors. Confidence in speaking English was also diverse, with a significant number of students feeling either very confident or not confident at all. The study highlighted the importance of considering these factors in designing effective English language learning programs for elementary school students in the region.

One limitation of the study was the reliance on self-reported data, which may be subject to bias. Additionally, the study focused on a specific region and may not be generalizable to other contexts. The sample size was also limited, which could affect the generalizability of the findings. Future studies could address these limitations by using larger, more diverse samples and employing a mix of qualitative and quantitative methods to provide a more comprehensive understanding of students' attitudes toward English language learning.

Future studies could explore the effectiveness of different teaching methods and approaches in improving students' English language skills and attitudes. Longitudinal studies could also be conducted to track students' attitudes and language proficiency over time. Additionally, studies could investigate the role of teachers and teaching strategies in shaping students' attitudes toward English language learning. Comparisons between different regions or countries could also provide valuable insights into the factors influencing attitudes towards English language learning.

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