

The Attitude toward English One Course of the First Year Students

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Abstract

English 1 is a compulsory course that all first year students in Rajamangala University of Technology Srivijaya Songkhla have to study. The achievement of each student was not satisfying. There were a large number of students who did not pass. The information from the students showed that some of them had taken this course more than three or four times until they were retired as a result of this. Teachers try to help the students. Many possible techniques have been used such as tutorial sessions, additional assignment, adjustment of textbooks, including conducting research to help them. However, a number of students still failed in this course.

The objective of this research was to investigate the attitude of the first year students on English 1. The participants were 297 first year students taking the course in Semester 1 Academic year 2012. The questionnaire is a five rating scale of 2 sections: general information section and attitude section.

It was revealed that the students' attitude was; 14 issues were at moderate and 6 issues were at high level. The first 3 high-rated issues were "I want to be competent in English", "English is helpful in future career" and "English can help in professional development". The first 3 lowest rated issues were "English is easy to practice", "I always prepare before attending the class" and "English can create confidence and creativity".

The analysis showed that most of the cases the students' attitude significantly depend on gender and the faculty they are studying.

Key words: Attitude, English One Course

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Introduction

English is an important foreign language and it is a compulsory subject in all levels of the education (Ministry of Education, 2010). At Rajamangala University of Technology Srivijaya, Songkhla (RMUTSV), English 1 is a compulsory subject for first year students, in their first semester regardless of their majors. However, a number of students who didn't pass in this subject are still very high (see Table 1). All teachers who respond in this subject try to solve the problem by doing researches, providing extra courses or giving extra exercises but we still have a number of students who aren't successful in this course. This may be caused by students who have negative attitudes toward English or they don't see the importance of the English language in their lives. They only face or use the Thai language. Thus, there seems to be an urgent need to know the students' attitude in order to find ways to solve the problems and help students to succeed in their studies and gain more knowledge in English to prepare them for the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN).

Table 1 Number of Students who take English 1 with Number of Students who pass and don't pass the course

Year	Number of Students	Pass	Fail	Percentage
2011	1,692	1,337	355	20.98
2010	1,775	1,532	243	13.69
2009	941	812	129	13.70
2008	682	593	89	13.04
2007	663	584	79	11.91
Total	5,753	4,858	895	15.56

Source: Office of Academic Promotion and Registration, RMUTSV

The aims of the study

The purpose of this study is to find out the first year students' attitude toward English 1 course as attitude has an important role to help or block students from gaining knowledge. The obtained information will provide useful information as sources or positive guides for teachers in improving the course and help to increase number of students who pass the English 1 course.

The scope of the study

The study was limited to find the first year students' attitude of the English 1 course at Rajamangala University of Technology Srivijaya, Songkhla. Therefore, the results of the study are applicable only to this university.

Population and subject

The population of the study were 1,367 students who passed the University Entrance Examination and were studying in the first year for a bachelor's degree at Rajamangala University of Technology Srivijaya Songkhla. They took the English 1 course as a compulsory subject in the first semester of academic year 2012. By using

Krejcie & Morgan, the 297 subject were obtained and were selected by stratified sampling and simple random sampling from the name lists of those population.

Literature Review

An attitude is a relatively enduring organization of beliefs, feelings, and behavioral tendencies towards socially significant objects, groups, events or symbols (Hogg & Vaughan 2005, p. 150). Moreover, Eagly & Chaiken, (1993, p. 1) said that attitude is a psychological tendency that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favor or disfavor. Attitude is not stable, communication and behavior of other people, are social influences in changing attitude, as well as an individual's motivation can made attitude change. Emotion plays a major role in persuasion, social influence, and attitude change. (Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia (N.D.)http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Attitude_change Retrieved 12 June 2012). Attitude is an interest that drives behavior. People tend to act favorably toward things they like and unfavorably toward things they do not like. That is, attitude has two sides: positive attitude and negative attitude. A positive attitude or interest or favorably helps you cope more easily with the daily life or problem. It brings optimism into your life, and makes it easier to avoid worries and negative thinking. If you adopt it as a way of life, it will bring constructive changes into your life, and makes them happier, brighter and more successful. (Sasson (N.D.)http://www.successconsciousness.com/positive_attitude.htm Retrieved 12 June 2012). A negative attitude or unfavorably would be a person that would not have anything positive to say or do. This would be an attitude of bad feelings towards things or people. (<http://www.reference.com/motif/health/negative-attitude> Retrieved 12 June 2012). However, attitude can be changed from negative attitude to positive attitude or in the opposite. Positive attitude will be a good motivation for students to be success in their study. If students have positive attitude toward to a subject that they study, they will try to gain more knowledge and success in their study. From a research about attitudes and satisfaction of Mathayom 4-5 students in Pattani towards the English camp activities by Saidee and Sulaiman (2005) found that students had positive attitudes towards learning English after participating in the English Camp. Moreover, the activities in the camp can help students have more confidences in speaking English. Furthermore, the environment in the camp which isn't tense-students can wear casual clothes, do several activities such as playing games or singing by these students can unconscious learning. From this, teachers should create atmosphere for learning in order to bring positive attitude to students. As positive attitude can help students try to solve problems that they face and help them achieve more knowledge (Saidee and Sulaiman. 2005 cited in Journal of Human Sciences 2008). From a research about motivation and attitudes towards learning English: a study of Petroleum Engineering Undergraduates at Hadhramout University of Sciences And Technology found that learning English as a part of the culture had the least impact in students' English language motivation. On the other hand, data for the students' attitudes revealed that most of students had positive attitudes towards the social value and educational status of English. In addition, the findings showed the students' positive orientation toward the English language. Interestingly, the results indicated that a high number of the students showed their interest in the culture of the English speaking world as represented by English-language films. Some pedagogical implications could help tap the students' motivation and attitudes. Shuib (N.D.).

Instrument in the research

A checklist to find students' attitude toward the English 1 course was used to gather the information from the subject. It consists of 2 parts: the first was about personal information of each student and the second part consists of 20 items which ask about students' attitude with the course. To do the checklist the subjects were required to rate each item of the checklist according to the following five point scales:

5	means	Absolutely Agree
4	means	Agree
3	means	Not Sure
2	means	Disagree
1	means	Strongly Disagree

Data collection

The checklist to find students' attitude was distributed to the subjects at the end of the first semester of academic year 2012. In the first part, the subjects replied about themselves by putting / on their answer and in the second part they also responded to the checklist by putting / in each five point scale that they wanted. The obtained data were analyzed by using percentage (%), Mean \bar{X} and Standard Deviation (SD).

Results of the study

Part 1 General Information Section

Table 2 Number and Percentage in General Information of Subject

Gender	No. of the subject	Percentage
Female	188	63.3
Male	109	36.7
Total	297	100.0
Faculty of		
Engineering	66	22.2
Industrial Education and Technology	33	11.1
Business Administration	100	33.7
Liberal Arts	98	33.0
Total	297	100.0

The general information of the subject from Table 2 showed that the genders of the subject are females (63.3%) and males (36.7%). They were studying in faculty of Business Administration (33.7%), faculty of Liberal Arts (33%), faculty of Engineering (22.2%) and faculty of Industrial Education and Technology (11.1%) respectively.

Part 2 The Attitude of the Subject toward English 1 Course

Table 3 Mean Standard Deviation and Attitude of the Subject toward English 1 Course

	\bar{x}	SD	Level of Attitude
1. English 1 course is fun and interesting.	3.83	0.797	Moderate
2. English can create confidence and creativity.	3.77	0.764	Moderate
3. English is easy for practice.	3.64	0.946	Moderate
4. English is helpful in future career.	4.35	0.720	High
5. I am very happy when study this course	3.78	1.019	Moderate
6. I want to be competent in English.	4.43	0.709	High
7. I think English is helpful.	4.27	0.802	High
8. I sent my homework on time.	4.15	0.770	Moderate
9. I read the English 1 book before having an exam.	3.97	0.790	Moderate
10. I always prepare before attending the class.	3.71	0.781	Moderate
11. I think I can improve my ability in English.	4.00	0.693	Moderate
12. If I get a low grade, I will try harder.	4.21	0.648	High
13. If I make a mistake, I will try to solve it.	4.04	0.679	Moderate
14. English 1 is an important course.	4.23	0.660	High
15. I try to gain more knowledge in English from medias such as TV. , radio and internet etc.	3.98	0.782	Moderate
16. Teaching aids and medias help my understanding.	3.98	0.773	Moderate
17. I feel relaxing and happy when I study English 1 course.	3.81	0.957	Moderate
18. If I cannot do the exam, I will revise by reading the book.	3.94	0.647	Moderate
19. English can help in professional development.	4.29	0.761	High
20. I won't do others assignments when I am studying.	4.03	0.887	Moderate
Total	4.02	0.487	Moderate

Table 3 showed that the attitude of the subject toward English 1 course in a whole picture was at a moderate level (4.02), SD = 0.487). When considered it each item, found that the students' attitude towards English 1 course was; 14 issues were at moderate and 6 issues were at high level. The first 3 high-rated issues were "I want to be competent in English", "English is helpful in future career" and "English can help in professional development". The first 3 lowest rated issues of a moderate level were "English is easy to practice", "I always prepare before attending the class" and "English can create confidence and creativity".

Part 3 The Analysis of Attitude of the Subject toward English 1 Course by using Personal Information

Table 4 Mean Standard Deviation and T-test of Attitude of the Subject toward English 1 Course in Term of Gender

	t-test	Sig
1. English 1 course is fun and interesting.	2.949	0.003*
2. English can create confidence and creativity.	2.816	0.005*
3. English is easy for practice.	2.356	0.019*
4. English is helpful in future career.	2.671	0.008*
5. I am very happy when study this course	2.476	0.014*
6. I want to be competent in English.	3.032	0.003*
7. I think English is helpful.	2.477	0.014*
8. I sent my homework on time.	5.069	0.000*
9. I read the English 1 book before having an exam.	4.180	0.000*
10. I always prepare before attending the class.	2.140	0.033*
11. I think I can improve my ability in English.	2.098	0.037*
12. If I get a low grade, I will try harder.	2.507	0.013*
13. If I make a mistake, I will try to solve it.	2.830	0.005*
14. English 1 is an important course.	1.891	0.060
15. I try to gain more knowledge in English from medias such as TV, radio and internet etc.	2.670	0.008*
16. Teaching aids and medias help my understanding.	3.562	0.000*
17. I feel relaxing and happy when I study English 1 course.	2.907	0.004*
18. If I cannot do the exam, I will revise by reading the book.	2.254	0.025*
19. English can help in professional development.	2.542	0.012*
20. I won't do others assignments when I am studying.	1.264	0.207
Total	4.446	0.000*

The obtained data from Table 4 indicated that in term of gender almost each item female and male had different attitude with Sig 0.05. There were only two items that female and male didn't have different attitude that is "English 1 is an important course" and "I won't do others assignments when I am studying".

Table 5 F-test of Attitude of the Subject toward English 1 Course in Term of Faculty

	F-test	Sig
1. English 1 course is fun and interesting.	31.801	0.000*
2. English can create confidence and creativity.	33.054	0.000*
3. English is easy for practice.	23.853	0.000*
4. English is helpful in future career.	15.098	0.000*
5. I am very happy when study this course	44.877	0.000*
6. I want to be competent in English.	7.516	0.000*
7. I think English is helpful.	21.818	0.000*
8. I sent my homework on time.	6.337	0.000*
9. I read the English 1 book before having an exam.	4.222	0.006*
10. I always prepare before attending the class.	1.924	0.126
11. I think I can improve my ability in English.	3.632	0.013*
12. If I get a low grade, I will try harder.	5.812	0.001*
13. If I make a mistake, I will try to solve it.	2.203	0.088
14. English 1 is an important course.	3.125	0.026*
15. I try to gain more knowledge in English from medias such as TV, radio and internet etc.	3.627	0.013*
16. Teaching aids and medias help my understanding.	18.840	0.000*
17. I feel relaxing and happy when I study English 1 course.	29.742	0.000*
18. If I cannot do the exam, I will revise by reading the book.	2.307	0.077
19. English can help in professional development.	5.992	0.001*
20. I won't do others assignments when I am studying.	2.341	0.073
Total	4.783	0.000*

The information from Table 5 showed that the subject from different faculty almost had different attitude toward the English 1 course with 0.05 Sig. However, there were only four items that the subject from different faculty didn't have different attitude: "I always prepare before attending the class", "If I make a mistake, I will try to solve it", "If I cannot do the exam, I will revise by reading the book" and "I won't do others assignments when I am studying".

Summary

For general information section, it was found that most of the subjects were female (63.3%) and male (36.7%). They are from Faculty of Business (33.7%), Faculty of Liberal Arts (33%), Faculty of Engineering (22.2) and Faculty of Industrial Education and Technology (11.1%) respectively. For attitude section, it was revealed the students' attitude towards English 1 course was at moderate level; 14 issues were at moderate and 6 issues were at high level. The first 3 high-rated issues were "I want to be competent in English", "English is helpful in future career" and "English can help in professional development". The first 3 lowest rated issues were "English is easy to practice", "I always prepare before attending the class" and "English can create confidence and creativity". The analysis showed that most of the cases the students' attitude significantly depend on gender and the faculty they are studying.

Recommendations for Further Study

Results of the study showed that the subject had attitude toward the English 1 course at a moderate level. The first 3 high score were “I want to be competent in English”, “English is helpful in future career” and “English can help in professional development”. That was, the subject needed to be good at English and they thought that English is helpful for them to find good job with good salary also the subject had good attitude that English could help them for career progression. In contrast, there were some issues that the subject had negative attitude with the course that was “English is easy to practice”, “I always prepare before attending the class” and “English can create confidence and creativity”. From these issues, it can be seen that the subject thought that English was very hard for them to practice, the subject didn’t prepare before they came to class and they thought that English can’t create confidence and creativity for them. We as teachers will have an important role to help students change their attitudes from negative to positive by providing them modern media teaching aids, useful technology, interesting teaching methodology or interesting and useful suggestion etc. As attitudes aren’t stable they can be change by several ways such as communication, behavior of other people and social influences. Moreover, an individual's motivation and emotion can made attitudes change. Thus, recommendations for further study are: it would be better to study about factors affecting the development of an attitude toward English of Thai learners and the responsible behavior toward English of Thai learners. These will help a researcher knows the attitude of Thai learners in deep points and the results from the studies will help the researcher or the teacher create more positive attitude to students in order to help them reach the goals in their studies. Furthermore, the achievement in English will help students have more confident in using English as a central language.

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