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A Study on the Attitude of the Secondary Students towards ESL and its Relationship with Academic Achievement

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Abstract:

Among different factors and variables that contribute second language (SL) learning, attitudes, motivations and anxiety take leading roles. Among them, the attitude of the students towards second language learning is regarded as one of the prime factors in learning the language. The present study is an attempt to explore the correlation between the attitude of the learners towards English as Second language (ESL) at secondary level and their academic achievement in the same subject in the context of West Bengal state of India. The sample of the study consists of 300 learners of class VIII from 6 schools of Howrah district. The Data were collected through using Gardner's Attitude/Motivation Test Battery Questionnaire and a self-made achievement test by the researcher. Means, percentage, Pearson product moment correlations, T-test etc were used to analyse the data. The analyses revealed positive correlation between achievement and attitude test on ESL.

Keywords: English as Second Language (ESL), Attitude, Academic Achievement

Introduction

The word attitude (from Latin aptus) is defined in social psychology as a subjective or mental preparation for action. It indicates favour or disfavour toward a person, place, thing or event (the attitude object). Attitudes may be positive (values) or negative (prejudice). Sometimes individual can hold multiple attitudes toward the same object. The easiest way to gauge the attitudes of the people is to ask them directly or to request them to report it. Generally, this method or approach is applied by using multiple test items on attitudes with formal scaling. Another term of this study, academic achievement refers to the degree of attainment of educational goals by the students or institutions. Thus, academic achievement denotes the desired outcome of education. The common way to measure academic achievement is through examinations or continuous assessment though it is hardly possible to achieve consensus about how it is best tested or which aspects are more important- procedural knowledge such as skills or declarative knowledge such as facts. Following National Curriculum Framework (NCF), 2005 of India Government, West Bengal Board of Secondary Education (WBBSE) defines six objectives of ESL learning holistically. The six objectives are- 1) The competence to understand what they hear, 2) Ability to read with comprehension, 3) Effortless expression, 4) Coherent writing, 5) Creativity and 6) Sensitivity. It is generally assumed that individual difference in academic achievement is closely linked to attitude towards the subject. Haifa Al-Buainain and Darwish Al-Emadi conducted a similar kind of

study on the female Qatari students. Their study suggested that the relationship between attitudes and achievement in ESL/EFL may be causal. However, no such study is found in the context of West Bengal. Therefore, the present attempt is made. This type of study will be an aid to frame the proper curriculum of this subject at a particular level in a particular region. This kind of study is also important as the educational policy makers will also be informed about the interests and problems of the students in a particular subject at secondary level. This study was conducted with the students of class VIII with the following objectives.

Objectives of the study

1. To measure the achievement on ESL of students of class VIII.
2. To study the attitude of that students towards the subject.
3. To relate the two parameters (achievement and attitude).

Statement of the Problem

This study tried to find out the performance of the class VIII students in the achievement test on ESL. Another target of this study is to investigate the attitude of the same students on ESL. The researcher also wanted to find out the relationship between the performance of achievement test and attitude towards ESL by the students. For this purpose, an attempt was made to investigate if there is any significant difference between the performance of the achievement test and attitude of students belonging to different area (urban or rural). So the problem may thus be stated as "A study on the attitude of the secondary students towards ESL and its relationship with academic achievement."

Statement of assumption

It is assumed that modern educational facilities are more easily accessible to the urban students than rural students. For example, in general their schools are more equipped with good teacher, good teaching aids etc. On the other hand, rural institutions often lack those modern facilities needed in modern teaching-learning processes. So a general assumption is that the performance of the urban students in achievement tests of ESL would be better than the performance of the rural students. Sometimes, school or social environment such as use of English as a mode of communication in society, or socio-economic conditions influence students' attitudes towards ESL. There is a high possibility of positive correlation between attitude and performance in achievement tests. However, sometimes positive attitude towards a subject shows negative correlation with the results of the achievement tests. Sometimes students are motivated by good teachers to grow their interests towards the subject. However, lack of facilities and unfavourable socio-economic condition and environment etc exert negative effects on the performance of the students in achievement tests in ESL.

Statement of hypothesis

On the basis of above assumption the following hypothesis were formulated.

H01: There is no significant co-relation between the performance of achievement test and attitude towards English as Second Language (ESL) of class VIII students.

H02: There is no significant difference in the result of achievement test in English as Second Language (ESL) between rural and urban students.

H03: There is no significant difference in the result of attitude test towards English as Second Language (ESL) between rural and urban students.

Delimitations of the Study

For this study, following delimitations were identified

- Only schools of Howrah district in West Bengal are selected
- Only Government- Sponsored secondary schools are selected

Survey area

For the purpose of data collection, 3 schools from urban areas and 3 schools from rural areas of Howrah district were selected by using cluster sampling technique through random number table. Manickpur Adarsha Vidyapith, Raghudebbati Sadharaner Vidyalaya and Khardah High School were taken as rural area school. Chengail Shree Vidyaniketan High School, Jagacha High School and Unsani High School were taken as urban area school. The survey work was done in the selected schools with the students of class VIII by taking 50 students from each school by means of random sampling.

Table: 1 Details of the school and school students under survey area

Area of School	Name and address of the School	No. of Student	Date of Survey
Urban Area	Chengail Shree Vidyaniketan High School, Chengail, Uluberia, Howrah	50	28.7.2016
Urban Area	Jagacha High School, Santragachi, Howrah	50	25.7.2016
Urban Area	Unsani High School, Unsani, Howrah	50	26.7.2016
Rural Area	Manickpur Adarsha Vidyapith, Manickpur, Sankrail, Howrah	50	29.7.2016
Rural Area	Raghudebbati Sadharaner Vidyalaya, Nalpur, Howrah	50	22.7.2016
Rural Area	Khardah High School, Khardah, Amta, Howrah	50	27.7.2016

Construction of Achievement test

The researcher prepared a questionnaire consisting of 36 questions to measure the achievement of the students of class VIII in ESL. During the preparation of the questionnaire,

his experience as a teacher of secondary level helped him a lot. The questions which cover all the four cognitive domains have a total mark of 50. The researcher used test-retest method to standardize the questionnaire.

Construction of Attitude test

For the purpose of evaluating the attitude of the learners towards ESL, the researcher used a questionnaire adapted from Gardner's Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) (2004) which has a 5 point scale, ranging from 'strongly agree to strongly disagree. The questionnaire is made up of 48 questions. The AMTB is reported to have good reliability and validity. (Gardner 1985). The researcher made some minor alterations in the questionnaires to make it more comprehensible and suitable to the ESL learners of West Bengal.

Result

For the present study to determine the relationship between performance in achievement and attitude of the students of class VIII, this researcher selected 6 schools of Howrah district, 3 from urban area and 3 from rural area. Total number of students were 300 out of which 150 were from urban schools and remaining 150 were from rural schools.

Figure 1 Graphical representation of the average marks obtained by the students of different strata

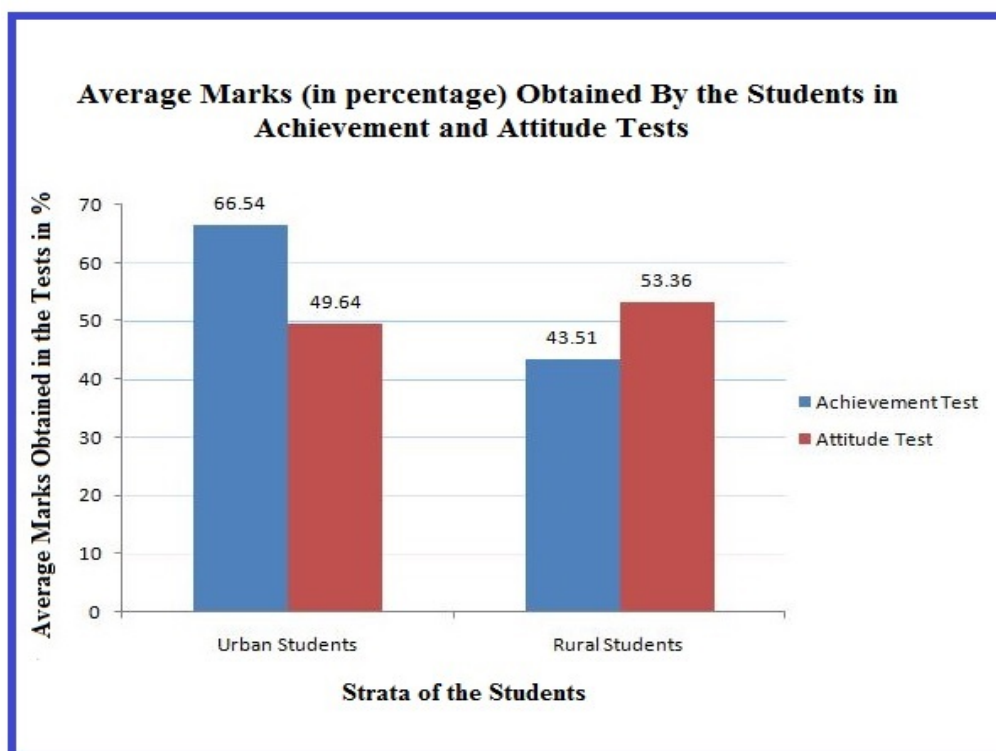
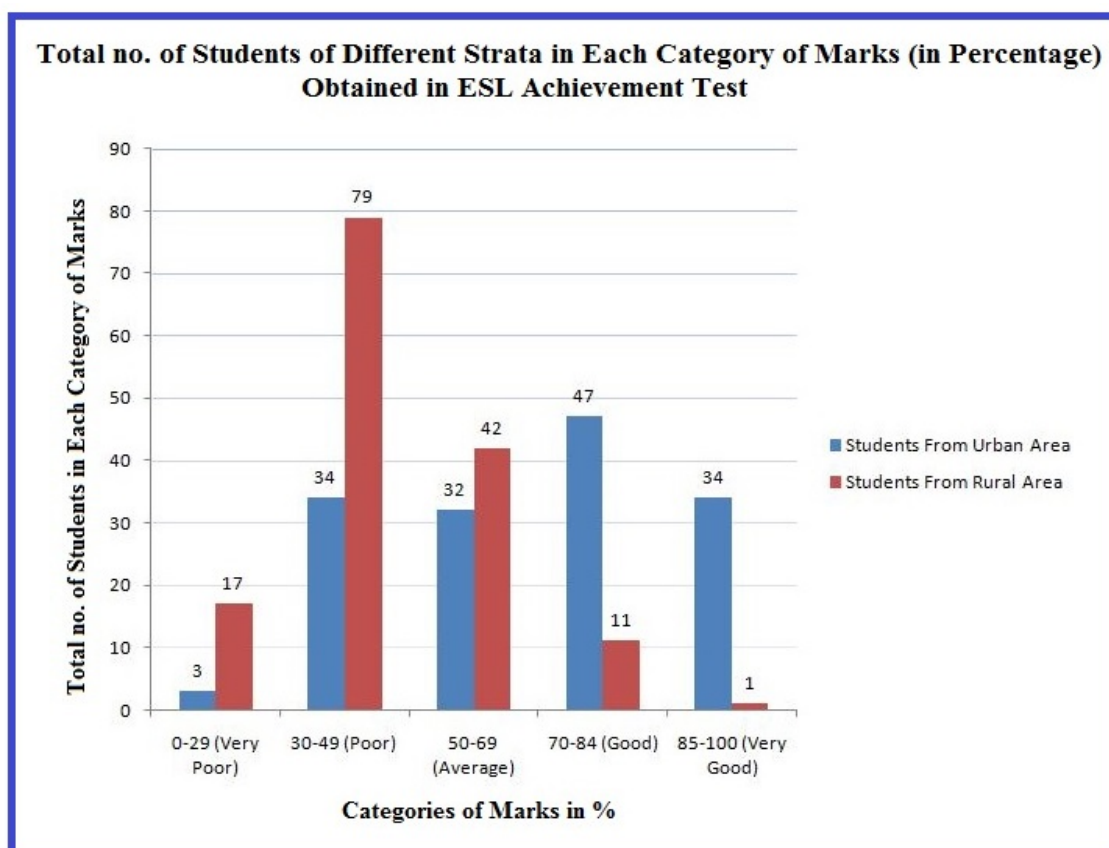


Figure 1 reveals that average marks obtained in achievement test by urban students is higher than their marks obtained in attitude test. Whereas rural students have a lower average marks in achievement tests than in attitude tests.

Table: 2 Variation among the students and tests

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value	F crit
Students	7131.34375	99	72.03378	1.49564	0.0232427	1.39406
Achievement and Attitude Tests	195.03125	1	195.0313	4.04944	0.0469024	3.93711
Error	4768.09375	99	48.16256			
Total	12094.46875	199				

From table 2, it may be concluded that the variation in data is due to difference in two test. This is statistically significant as in test case, F value is higher than F crit. Here variation is also present among the students.

Figure 2 Graphical representation of total no. of students of different strata in each category of marks (%) obtained in achievement test in ESL

The bar diagram of Figure 2 shows that the performances of the students in urban schools are better than the rural schools. Among all the students, 11.67% students score mark between 85-100. Among all the urban students, 22.67% students fall in very good category. Overall,

the performance of the urban students in achievement test in ESL is better than the rural students.

Figure 3 Graphical representation of total no. of students of different strata in each category of marks (%) obtained from attitude test towards ESL

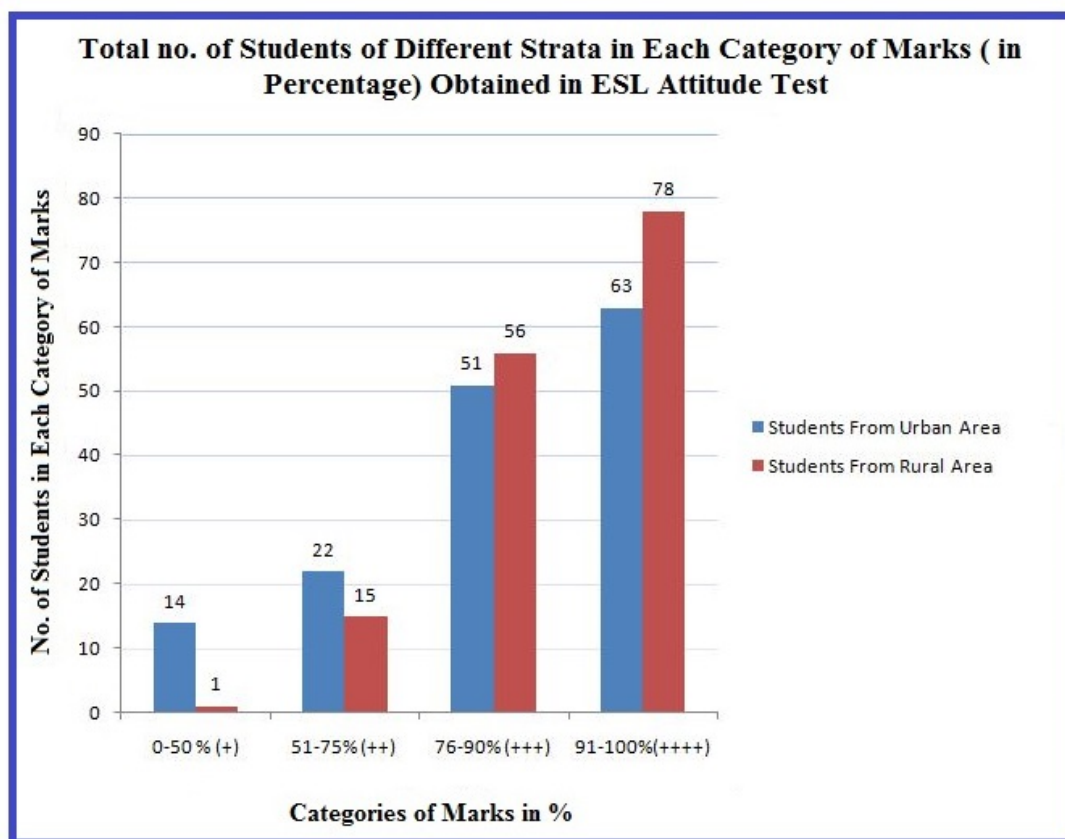


Figure 3 represents that rural students show more positive attitude towards the subject. It is also noticeable that majority of the students show positive attitude towards learning ESL.

Correlation between achievement and attitude test

Correlation between achievement and attitude test of students towards ESL was calculated and significance of the correlation was defined by Pearson's product moment method.

Table: 3 Co-relation between achievement and attitude tests of all students of class VIII on ESL

Subject	r-value	Remarks
Total Students	0.276086	Positively correlated

Table 3 reveals a positive correlation for most of the students of class VIII between the marks of achievement test and attitude test in ESL.

T-test to determine the significant difference between the samples of different strata depending on achievement and attitude test.

Table: 4a T-test to determine the significant difference between the samples of different strata depending on achievement test.

Experiment Title	No. of Obsevation	Pearson Correlation	df	t Stat	Comment
T-test between rural and urban students depending on their performance (marks) in achievement test on Physical science.	150	0.149767	149	7.074927	Difference between the two groups is significant at 0.0005 level

T-test between rural and urban students depending on their performance (marks) in achievement test on ESL

T- value from table 4a shows that mean difference between the two groups is significant at 0.0005 level. It means significant difference is present in the marks obtained from the achievement test of rural and urban students.

Table: 4b T-test to determine the significant difference between the samples of different strata depending on attitude test.

Experiment Title	No. of Obsevation	Pearson Correlati on	df	t Stat	Comment
T-test between rural and urban students depending on their performance (marks) in attitude test towards	150	0.154677	149	2.37236	Difference between the two groups is significant at

Physical science.					0.05 level
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T-test between rural and urban students depending on their performance (marks) in attitude test towards ESL.

In table 4b, T- value shows that mean difference between the two groups is significant at 0.05 level. It means significant difference is present in the marks obtained from the attitude test of rural and urban students.

Discussion of Results

Analysis of the study is based on mainly two types of tests among the students of class VIII of urban and rural area. These two types of tests are achievement test and attitude test. For the purpose of analysis of data, various statistical methods like mean, median, standard deviation (SD), variance, correlation and T-test are used.

Performance of Students in Achievement Test

Table 3 shows that variation in data in two types of tests is statistically significant. It rejects the null hypothesis (H01) that stated that there is no significant co-relation between the performance of achievement test and attitude test on ESL among all students studying in class VIII. During the conversation with the students (particularly the girl students) from urban area, this researcher found that they are very conscious about their academic results. However, some of them admitted that they had more interest in other subjects than English. This may be the reason that in some cases, performance in attitude test towards ESL is much lower than in achievement test. Savignon's study (1972) which was conducted on college students reported no correlation between early attitudes and measures of final achievement. However, as the students progressed, the correlation between their attitudes and their achievement increased. Again, Michelli (2013) revealed in his thesis a significant relationship between attitudes toward and achievement in math in fifth grade students. But other students have more or less equal result in attitude and achievement test. It means that there is no significant difference in the performance of achievement and attitude test. This situation echoes the null hypothesis (H01) that stated that there is no significant correlation between the performance of achievement test and attitude test on ESL of class VIII among all students. From figure 2, it is revealed that among all the students only 35 (11.67%) students performed very well in achievement test and 133 (44.33%) students belongs to the below average category. Over all 167 (55.67%) students in the sample fall in between average to very good category on the basis of ESL achievement test. It is observed that mainly in rural schools, low infrastructural facilities and inappropriate pupil-teacher ratio are major problems. In urban schools, some boys complained of irregularity of classes.

Performance of Students in Attitude test

Figure 3 reveals that 136 (45.33%) students from urban area among all the students showed positive attitude towards the subject ESL at above 50% level. It means that 90.67% students from urban area showed positive attitude towards the subject above 50% level. 149 students from rural area showed positive attitude above 50% level, which constitutes 99.33% sample

of the rural students. There was only 1 student from rural area, who showed positive attitude below 50% level.

This study also reveals that rural area students show positive attitude towards the subject but this attitude is not always reflected on their performances in the achievement tests. In 2007, Nuthana P.G. stated that there was significant association between study habits, self-concept, socio economic status and academic achievement among the students. Urban students have higher academic achievement than rural students.

Correlation between the performance on achievement and attitude test of Students

The previous discussion shows positive correlation between achievement and attitude test towards the subject in case of all the students. This data rejects the null hypothesis H01.

T-test to determine the significance difference of the performance of the students of different strata on achievement and attitude test.

T-test shows that significant statistical difference is present in the performance of achievement test by rural and urban student at 0.0005 level. That rejects the null hypothesis (H02) that stated no significant difference is present in the result of achievement test in ESL between rural and urban students.

T-test also shows that significant statistical difference is present in the performance of attitude test by rural and urban student. That rejects the null hypothesis (H03) that stated there is no significant difference in the result of attitude test towards ESL between rural and urban students.

Conclusion

In this study, most of the students of class VIII show positive correlation between achievement and attitude test on ESL. The results of achievement test show significant difference between the students of different area (rural and urban). This difference in the performance in achievement test between rural and urban area students is highly significant at 0.0005 level. In case of attitude test towards ESL, difference is present in the marks obtained from the attitude test of rural and urban students, which is significant at 0.05 level. Rural area students show more positive attitude towards ESL than urban area students. School environments, educational facilities and other external factors may have effects on the students' performance in attitude and achievement tests in ESL.

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