

An Identification of Arabic Language Students' Attitudes and Achievements in Malaysian Public Universities

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Abstract

Attitude is one of the crucial elements that influence the thoughts and actions of a student. The influence of attitude causes a person to think, act, make perceptions and feelings in the face of an object, idea, situation and value. Studies on student attitudes are significant because positive or negative attitudes often influence student achievement. Thus, this study aims to identify Arabic language students' attitudes and achievements in Malaysian public universities. For that purpose, three domains of attitude variables will be the main focus of this study, namely cognitive, affective and psychomotor domains. This study is in the form of a survey involving Malaysian public university students. The study respondents consisted of 494 Arabic language students from 1,883 in eight Malaysian public universities offering Arabic bachelor's program and Arabic language education. This study is designed using quantitative research. We use three sub-constructs, namely cognitive, affective and psychomotor. A total of 5 items measure each sub construct. This study also conducts exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and validation factor analysis (CFA). The data analyzed by assisting the statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS-23) software. This study's findings are that students' positive attitude makes students always cooperate in each task and share information. In conclusion, the student's attitude and ideas on language learning can ultimately improve student achievement.

Keywords

Attitude, student achievement, Arabic, Malaysian public university

1. Introduction

Attitude is considered one of the important elements that influence the thoughts and actions of a student. In fact, the influence of attitude causes a person to think, act, make perceptions and feelings in facing an object, idea, situation or value (Jalaluddin Rakhmat, 2001). A positive community will influence its members to be positive. This has been proven by the success of the Japanese and British people due to the positive attitude factor (Hasfizal Mukhtar, 2008). Thus, attitude has a big role in influencing the thoughts and actions of a society. Attitude is also a behavioral response driven by thought translated into the form of an individual's actions. Because teacher behavior involves interaction between teacher and student. Thus, the behavior and communication of teachers can influence the attitude and selection of students towards a subject (Zuria Mahmud and Mohammad Yaacob, 2007).

The findings of a study conducted by Kamisah and Zanaton (2007) found that teacher behavior influences students' positive attitude towards a subject. In fact, a study conducted by Nor Azizah Abdul Aziz, Siti Hajar Idrus and Zamri Mahamod (2008) related attitudes of secondary school students in private against the Malay Language subject found the percentage of respondents who agreed that the teachers influenced their attitude towards the subject is very high (85.6%). Teachers' behavior can have a positive impact on students' attitudes in cultivating students' interest in a particular subject. Attitude also plays a big role in the language learning and teaching (PdP) process. The findings of Abdullah Hassan (1980) show that genetic factors do not play an important role in second language PdP, even external factors such as motivation and attitudes that determine the success of the second language PdP process. Positive attitude and encouragement (stimulus) are very necessary in mastering a language.

Good cooperation and relationships are important because they can help form a tolerant attitude and can enhance social interaction among students (Che Nidzam Che Ahmad, 2011). Studies conducted by Fraser and Lee (2009) and Wong and Fraser (1996) found a significant relationship between cooperative practice and attitude. Thus, good cooperation and relationships can be a motivator to students' interest in learning a language, and in turn become a catalyst for a positive attitude that results in one's success. Other studies have also found a strong relationship between attitudes and learning environments. The study of Quek, Wong and Fraser (2005) shows that there is a relationship between the attitude and learning environment of chemistry in secondary schools in Singapore. Okan's study (2008) shows that there is a relationship between attitudes and learning environment of computer labs in English language classes in Turkey. Allen and Fraser's (2007) study also found a relationship between students' attitudes towards outcome (science and achievement in science) in the classroom learning environment in South Florida. While a study conducted by Ogbuehi and Fraser (2007) in California found a significant relationship between perceptions of the classroom learning environment and students' attitudes towards mathematics and concept development. A study conducted on 661 students as a sample involved 22 classrooms in secondary schools. The study uses the instrument What Happens In The Classroom? (WIHIC) modified, constructive Learning Environmental Survey (Cles) and Attitude Mathematics Test (TOMRA).

Positive student attitudes can be built with warmth. Students who think that their teacher is a familiar person are more likely to improve learning affectively and cognitively, they will be diligent in class, actively discuss and question-answer related to lessons, do teacher instructions and make less disciplinary mistakes (Devito, 2007). This coincides with the power theory of influence which views power not right but one's ability to influence another person. These positive or negative attitudes of students can be measured through three components or domains, namely cognitive domain, affective domain and psychomotor domain (Dewi Anggreani, 2009; Ghazali Yusri et al., 2010; Melina Akliandi, 2008; Mohd Makzan Musa, 1997). The measurement of attitudes using these domains coincides with the attitude domains in Gardner's Socio-Educational Theory (Gardner, 1985). The three domains according to Mohd Makzan Musa (1997) are important to shape student success. Cognitive domain is a belief, idea or perception that is related to one's knowledge or thinking about something. Affective domains are related to emotions that is a person's feelings whether they are good, like or dislike something. The psychomotor or conative domain refers to external behavior or actions as a reaction to something liked or vice versa. Studies also show that there is a significant relationship between attitudes and learning outcomes (Alias Baba, Halimah Harun and Mohd Sahandri, 1995; Amira Juhaida Zainuddin, 2009; Dahab, 1997; B. C. Tan, 2001). Students' positive attitude towards a subject will affect their success in that subject and if they perceive some subjects as difficult then their motivation and desire to learn decreases (Bloom, 1989).

3. Methods

This study uses quantitative methods aimed at determining the influence of dependent variables on independent variables (Hopkins, 2008). A set of questionnaires was used as the instrument of this study. This is because survey methods are an effective and practical way to obtain information (Fowler, 1998; Chua 2006). Data obtained through

survey methods are usually more accurate, within the sampling error range, if the reliability factor is at 0.80 level and above (Kerlinger, 1986). The use of this survey method has many advantages because it can measure opinions, attitudes, beliefs, values and behaviors and can be generalized from the sample to the population (Creswell, 2005). Surveys were conducted using a set of questionnaires to obtain the required data. Survey methods use questionnaires to measure attitudes or opinions with any number of variables and in natural conditions (Wiersma, 1991). Thus, the researcher chose to use the quantitative method in the form of a survey by using a set of questionnaires because this method is most suitable for this study.

This study is also descriptive because the researcher will provide information on the information collected by the researcher (Mohd Majid Konting, 2000; Wiersma, 1995). Because descriptive research is a method of collecting data to describe, compare and explain knowledge, attitudes, practices and behaviors (Ary, 1985). Therefore, the descriptive design is very suitable in this study because the findings of this study are information of current events and can be used to solve related problems for the future. The instrument of this study contains 15 items related to the construction of Arabic students' attitudes towards Arabic. Attitude has three sub-constructs namely cognitive, affective and psychomotor (Dewi Anggreani, 2009; Ghazali Yusri et al., 2010; Melina Akliandi, 2008; Mohd Makzan Musa, 1997). Each sub-construct was measured with five items, namely five items for the cognitive sub, five items for the affective sub construct and five items for the psychomotor sub construct. In total there are 15 items for attitude constructs. The items in this attitude construct were screened from 40 questionnaires on attitudes towards English language learning (Al Noursi, 2013). Adaptation and modification actions are made to adapt to the learning of Arabic based on literature.

Measurement of attitudes and learning outcomes is done by self-report (Self Report Inventory) or self-concept (LPK). Self-concept is a form of assessment that a person makes towards himself (Low, 2011). According to this method, students will self-assess their level of achievement based on their experience, views or self-assessment consciously by using the idea of "I" or "I". The use of LPK method in the study can be carried out due to certain weight and reasonable. According to Sumadi Suryabrata (1987), this method should and should be used because based on the assumption or claim that: (a) Individuals themselves are the people who know the most about their own condition and (b) Individuals themselves are people who have the ability and capability to express their situation and appreciation.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 The Attitude of Arabic Language (BA) Student's at Malaysian Public Universities

In this study, descriptive analysis that has been used by researchers involving mean scores and standard deviation only to explain the findings of the study. The findings of this study will answer the research question "What is the attitude of students in Arabic language (BA) classes in Malaysian public universities?". Attitude is behavior that is translated in the form of action by an individual through the impulse of thought. Thoughts are internal and difficult to understand. Experiences and perceptions that exist in a person's thinking of a thing or phenomenon will shape attitudes (Robb, Ross and Shortreed, 1986). In addition, attitudes are also shaped by the environment and are able to influence student achievement (Alias Baba, Halimah Harun and Mohd Sahandri, 1995; Dahab, 1997; Tan, 2001; Crow and Crow, 1983). Thus, attitude is considered important in influencing one's thoughts and actions in determining student achievement. Table 1 shows the mean, standard deviation, frequency, percentage and interpretation of student attitude level in BA learning in Malaysian public universities. The overall mean for all items in this section is 4.09 and the standard deviation of 0.54 is at a high level which gives a very positive interpretation.

Table 1. The result of frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation and interpretation of student attitude level

| Items | Frequency | | | | | Mean | S.D | Interpretation |
|--|-----------|-----------|------------|--------------|--------------|------|------|----------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | | | |
| I think BA is important in my life as a student. | 1 0.2% | 1 0.2% | 10 2.0% | 162 32.8% | 320 64.8% | 4.62 | 0.56 | Very Important |
| I mastered BA well. | 0 0.0% | 0 0.0% | 18 3.6% | 158 32.0% | 318 64.4% | 4.61 | 0.56 | Very Important |
| Mastering BA further increases my confidence in | 0 0.0% | 2 0.4% | 17 3.4% | 176 35.6 | 299 60.5 | 4.56 | 0.58 | Very Important |

| | | | | | | | | |
|--|-------------|-------|-------|-------|-----------------------|------|------|----------------|
| deepening my religious knowledge. | 0 | 1 | 15 | 194 | 284 | | | |
| I do not feel bored every time the lecturer teaches BA at KBA. | 0.0% | 0.2% | 3.0% | 39.3% | 57.5% | 4.54 | 0.57 | Very Important |
| I enjoy learning BA. | 0 | 0 | 20 | 190 | 284 | 4.53 | 0.57 | Very Important |
| I am determined to master BA well. | 4 | 5 | 18 | 213 | 254 | 4.43 | 0.69 | Very Important |
| I am actively involved during BA learning activities in this KBA. | 0 | 15 | 70 | 257 | 152 | 4.11 | 0.75 | Very Important |
| I learned BA not because of family pressure. | 31 | 44 | 86 | 111 | 222 | 3.91 | 1.24 | Less Important |
| Interesting BA lessons cause me to attend KBA often. | 26 | 67 | 80 | 77 | 244 | 3.90 | 1.29 | Less Important |
| 5.3% | 13.6% | 16.2% | 15.6% | 49.4% | | | | |
| I think BA learning is as important as other subjects. | 26 | 61 | 104 | 86 | 217 | 3.82 | 1.26 | Less Important |
| 5.3% | 12.3% | 21.1% | 17.4% | 43.9% | | | | |
| I am interested in studying BA because it is easy. | 29 | 82 | 102 | 84 | 197 | 3.68 | 1.30 | Less Important |
| 5.9% | 16.6% | 20.6% | 17.0% | 39.9% | | | | |
| I try my best to understand Arabic. | 45 | 116 | 113 | 82 | 138 | 3.31 | 1.34 | Less Important |
| 9.1% | 23.5% | 22.9% | 16.6% | 27.9% | | | | |
| I do not easily give up if I can not master BA learning well at KBA. | 78 | 83 | 135 | 159 | 39 | 3.00 | 1.20 | Less Important |
| 15.8% | 16.8% | 27.3% | 32.2% | 7.9% | | | | |
| Overall (Mean) | 4.09 | | | | Very Important | | | |

Table 1 shows the mean of 7 items out of 13 items for the student attitude variable has a mean value that is at a high level. This shows that students are very positive about these six items and it is hoped that it can have a positive effect on student achievement. Meanwhile, 6 more items for student attitude variables have a mean value that is at a moderately high level. The highest mean for the student attitude variable is that the student item thinks BA is important in life as a student which is a mean of 4.62 and a standard deviation of 0.56. The percentage of respondents who strongly agree and agree is 97.6% (482 students). This number far exceeds the percentage of students who disagree and strongly disagree which is 0.4% (2 students).

The second highest mean for the student attitude variable is the item of students mastering BA well which is a mean of 4.61 and a standard deviation of 0.56. The percentage of respondents who strongly agree and agree is 96.4% (476 students). No student disagrees and strongly disagrees. Next, the third highest item for student attitude variables is the item of mastering BA adding confidence to deepen religious knowledge which is a mean of 4.56 and a standard deviation of 0.58. The percentage of respondents who strongly agree and agree is 96.1% (405 students). This number far exceeds the percentage of students who disagree and strongly disagree which is 0.4% (2 students). Next, the item does not feel bored every time the lecturer teaches BA at KBA ($M = 4.54$, $S.D = 0.57$), the item is fun to learn BA ($M = 4.53$, $S.D = 0.57$), the item is determined to master BA well ($M = 4.43$, $S.D = 0.69$) and finally for the students'

attitude variables that have a mean value at a high level is that items are actively involved during BA learning activities in KBA ($M = 4.11$, $S.D = 0.75$).

Meanwhile the variable of attitude of students who have a mean value that is at a moderately high level is a learning item not because of family pressure ($M = 3.91$, $S.D = 1.24$), interesting BA teaching items cause frequent attendance to KBA ($M = 3.90$, $S.D = 1.29$), items felt BA learning as important as other subjects ($M = 3.82$, $S.D = 1.26$), items interested in learning BA because it was easy ($M = 3.68$, $S.D = 1.30$), items tried their best to understand Arabic ($M = 3.31$, $S.D = 1.34$) and finally for the students' attitude variables that have a mean value at a high level is that items are not easily discouraged if they can not master BA learning well ($M = 3.00$, $S.D = 1.20$). Although this item has the lowest mean but the difference with other items is still not far. This shows that the attitude of students in the Arabic language class (KBA) is very positive.

4.2 The Achievement of Arabic Language (BA) Student's at Malaysian Public Universities

The findings of this study will answer the research question "What is the achievement of students in Arabic language classes at Universiti Awam Malaysia?". Student achievement is the result or transition from something that contains high and deep knowledge. Table 2 shows the mean, standard deviation, frequency, percentage and interpretation of student achievement level. The overall mean for all items in this section is 4.41 and the standard deviation of 0.52 is at a high and very satisfactory level interpretation. This indicates high student achievement and needs to be maintained.

Table 2. the result of frequency, percentage, mean, standard deviation and interpretation of student achievement levels

| Items | Frequency | | | | | Mean | S.D | Level |
|--|-------------|-----------|-------------|--------------|--------------|-------------|------|-------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | | | |
| I feel lucky to study BA. | 2 0.4% | 1 0.2% | 15 3.0% | 199 40.3% | 277 56.1% | 4.51 | 0.61 | High |
| I enjoy browsing Arabic language websites. | 0 0.0% | 2 0.4% | 24 4.9% | 208 42.1% | 260 52.6% | 4.47 | 0.61 | High |
| I always speak Arabic. | 0 0.0% | 1 0.2% | 23 4.7% | 228 46.2% | 242 49.0% | 4.44 | 0.59 | High |
| I always read Arabic books or journals. | 1 0.2% | 2 0.4% | 39 7.9% | 243 49.2% | 209 42.3% | 4.33 | 0.66 | High |
| I always write in Arabic. | 0 0.0% | 1 0.2% | 55 11.1% | 229 46.4% | 209 42.3% | 4.31 | 0.67 | High |
| Overall (Mean) | 4.41 | | | | | High | | |

All of these items are at a high level. This shows that students have high achievement with the teaching and learning that takes place in KBA and need to be maintained. Table 2 shows the highest mean for student achievement is the feeling of being lucky to study BA. i.e. mean 4.51 and standard deviation 0.61. The percentage of respondents who strongly agree and agree is 96.4% (476 students). This number far exceeds the percentage of students who disagree and strongly disagree which is 0.6% (3 students). The next four items are also at a high level, namely enjoy browsing Arabic language websites ($M = 4.47$, $S.D = 0.61$), always speak in Arabic ($M = 4.44$, $S.D = 0.59$), always read books or journals in Arabic ($M = 4.33$, $S.D = 0.66$) and the lowest M is always writing in Arabic ($M = 4.31$, $S.D = 0.67$). These findings illustrate that student achievement with Teaching and Learning that takes place in KBA needs to be maintained.

The findings show that student items that BA thinks are important in life as students are the highest followed by student items mastering BA well, items mastering BA add confidence to deepen religious knowledge, items do not feel bored every time lecturers teach BA at KBA, items enjoy BA learning, items are determined to master BA well and items are actively involved during BA learning activities in KBA. This shows that Arabic language students in Malaysian public universities are very positive and confident that they have a bright future by learning Arabic either in the world, especially in the hereafter. This is supported by the second highest item (mastering BA adds confidence in deepening religious knowledge) because students believe the mastery of Arabic allows them to understand the original texts of Islam in more detail and clarity. Also, the level of student achievement is high and very satisfactory. Since students do not consider learning Arabic at a Malaysian public university is a waste of time, in fact they are very happy to learn Arabic, so their achievement also increases, further improving learning outcomes i.e. student achievement. A positive attitude makes students always cooperate in each task and share information and ideas about language learning will be able to overcome every problem they face. Even good cooperation and relationships can

help form an attitude of tolerance and in turn can increase social interaction among students (Che Nidzam Che Ahmad, 2011). Therefore, a positive student attitude can cultivate students' interest in each subject.

5. Conclusion

This study generally aims to examine the level of attitude and achievement of students in BA classes in Malaysian public universities. Based on the findings that have been presented before. Attitude is behavior formed from a person's experience and perception of a thing or phenomenon and translated into action by an individual through the impulse of thought. The results of the data analysis show that Arabic language students in Malaysian public universities as a whole have a very positive (high) attitude towards the teaching and learning of Arabic language classes.

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