



Attitude of Undergraduate Pakistani Students of other Disciplines towards English as a Minor Subject: A Case Study of Undergraduate Students at Minhaj University Lahore, Pakistan

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Abstract: The present study is a first-hand exploration of university students' attitudes by a university lecturer teaching in various departments. The study gives an insight into the motivation level of these students towards their English language class, their expectations from the course, their feedback about the content being taught to them and their general attitude towards English as a language. Students from various departments were interviewed with open-ended questions by the teacher to get in-depth qualitative answers, as well as with a questionnaire of close-ended questions for some quantitative analysis too. The answers of the students were categorized according to research questions, and they were analyzed to find the most common answers and to get the gist of students' feedback and revise our course content and policy of English as a compulsory subject in undergraduate programs accordingly. The analysis of their answers showed that the majority of the students wanted to learn the English language but they found the course content and teaching methodologies, including classroom instructions, a bit boring. Most of the students expected grammar and spoken skills to be taught. Very few students were of the view that ESP courses with subject-specific English should be taught to them. The findings of this research are limited to students of Minhaj University Lahore.

Introduction

In the postmodern era, English has been internationally acknowledged and adopted as an international language or lingua franca. English has become the language of science and technology. It is also a widely used language for communication through social media platforms. It is also used as a medium language for instruction in higher education in many universities. It has become a status symbol and a source of prestige in many countries. It has become an important tool to excel in any field of life.

But we cannot teach anyone unless he is willing to be taught. Motivation for learning is very important. Many policies are made, analyzed and revised. Separate departments in Pakistani Universities are being established with the title name, 'ELC' stands for English Language Centre. These actions are being done with the claims of improving the English language skills of our university students to meet their academic and professional challenges. However, on the other hand, as English teachers, we find that the majority of our students are not able to speak a few sentences or write a few sentences in English. Many issues have been discussed, and arguments

have been given in this regard by ELT experts, teachers, professors and researchers. The current study focuses on one aspect of this inquiry; up to what extent are students motivated and willing to improve these skills? And are they satisfied with the nature of the syllabus being taught to them? The study is based on the argument that motivation to learn is a prerequisite to learning any language. Forced or imposed subjects on the student do not bring desired or target results in any learning environment. If students are not willing to attend a subject or learn something, they are forced to do it. It creates meaninglessness in the process of education and causes frustration when we put a young student to follow something which he does not want to do.

The language instructor should consider the attitude of learners into consideration while developing the curriculum and instructions for language learners. Attitude is said to be a mental state of how one believes and feels about something (Latchanna & Dagnew, 2009). Students' beliefs and attitudes can be a hurdle if they believe it is difficult for them to learn a language (Lennartsson, 2008). Language attitude is defined as how one feels towards one's first language or how he feels towards any other language (Crystal 1997). Language learning behaviour can be determined by language attitude. According to Baker (1992), the survival or preservation of a language depends on the attitudes of people towards that language. Having a negative attitude towards a language can hinder language teaching (Ellis, 1994). To get a positive result in language learning, we can change the attitude of learners towards a language, and we can shift their attitude from a negative attitude to the positive one. (Lennartsson, 2008). Kramsch (2006) identified that "language learners are not only communicators and problem-solvers, but whole persons with hearts, bodies, and minds, with memories, fantasies, loyalties, identities". According to Lennartsson (2008) positive attitude and the will to learn a language are much more

important factors than the social factors that can affect language learning.

Objectives of the Study

- To know the motivation and likeness of undergraduate students of other disciplines in Pakistan towards their subject of English language.
- To know the expectations of undergraduate students of other disciplines in Pakistan from their course in the English language.
- To explore the feedback of undergraduate students of other disciplines about the content of English as a minor subject being taught to them.
- To know the general attitude of undergraduate students of other disciplines towards English as a second language.

Significance

The present study will help English language teachers to get an insight into the motivation level and attitude of undergraduate students of other disciplines towards English as a minor subject and to improve their content and teaching strategies accordingly to increase the interest level of students.

Research Questions

- How motivated are undergraduate students of other departments towards English as a minor subject?
- What do the undergraduate students of other departments expect from the course of English language?
- What do the undergraduate students of other disciplines feel about the content of English being taught to them?
- What is the general attitude of undergraduate students of other disciplines towards English as a language?

Literature Review

Baker (1992) wrote a detailed book titled 'Attitudes and Languages' and discussed how attitude could affect language learning while learning any language. He discussed language and attitude change and also the attitudes towards bilingualism. This book was an in-depth study of not only the attitude affecting language learning but also discussed various dimensions and perspectives of research into this matter and the measurement of attitude as well.

Gomleksiz (2010) investigated the students' attitudes towards learning the English Language in terms of several variables. The study was made on selective students from Forat University, Turkey. This research studies the attitude of these students in terms of variables including gender, age and department variable. This paper also included some useful recommendations at the end to create a positive attitude in students towards English language learning.

Viet (2017) conducted research to explore undergraduate students' attitudes towards English. This research was conducted on 649 students of Nong Lam University, Vietnam. The research used quantitative method by using a questionnaire and concluded that the students have a positive attitude towards English as a foreign language.

Ahmed (2015) conducted a survey on 238 undergraduate students of other disciplines at a Public university in Malaysia. This was a qualitative study. The study concluded that the attitude towards English was different among the students of various disciplines. The research suggested that one single curriculum or teaching methodology was not suitable for teaching English to all undergraduate students.

Herwiana & Laili (2019) also conducted a qualitative study to analyze the attitude of students at an elementary school in Indonesia. The research analyzed that the student had a positive attitude towards the English language. However, they had poor competence in the

English language. The research also gave a few suggestions to the government to make certain changes to improve their competence.

Limitations

Being a case study of Minhaj University, the results and findings of this research cannot be applied equally to all undergraduate students of Pakistan. The situation may vary in different regions and different types of communities that students belong to. Other researchers may also conduct similar studies on other students studying in other Universities in other parts of the country.

Research Methodology

The present study is a qualitative descriptive study conducting a survey using a questionnaire and almost five months of classroom observations for the data collection. Almost 200 students were included in this research. The instrument for data collection was classroom observation and a questionnaire. The target population were undergraduate students of Minhaj University Lahore. However, using convenient sample techniques, 150 students were selected for the interview from the department of Law, Software Engineering, Computer Science, Islamic Banking and Finance, Urdu, Political Science, Chemistry, Information Technology and Peace and conflict studies. This selection of departments was made based on the convenience that the researcher was teaching in these departments as a Lecturer of the English language.

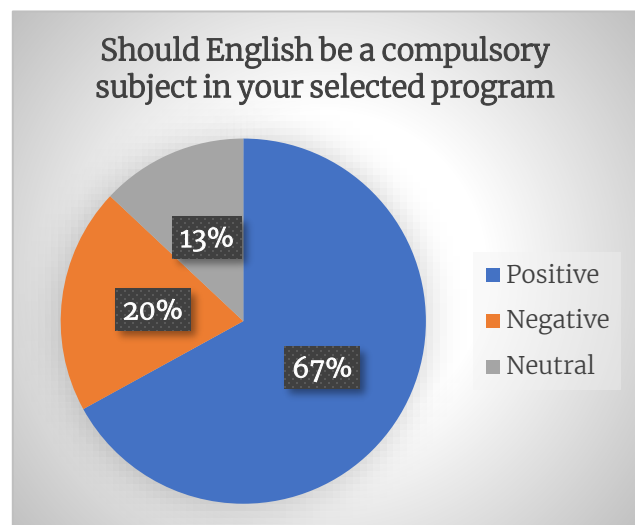
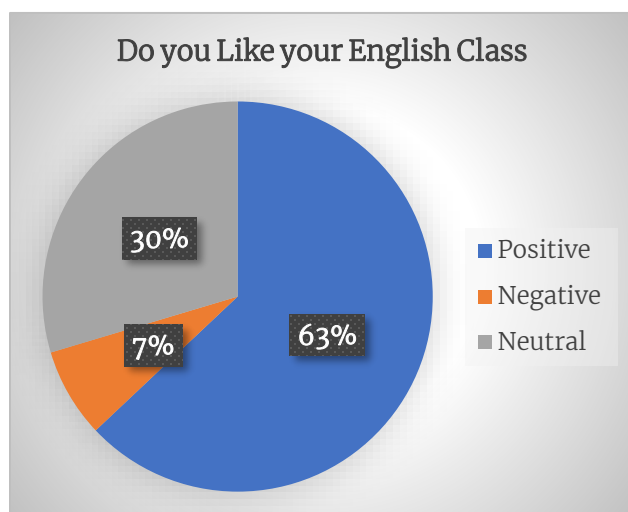
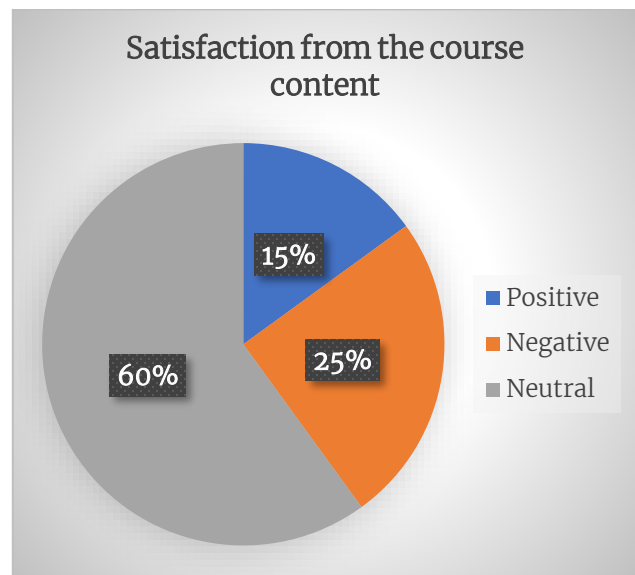
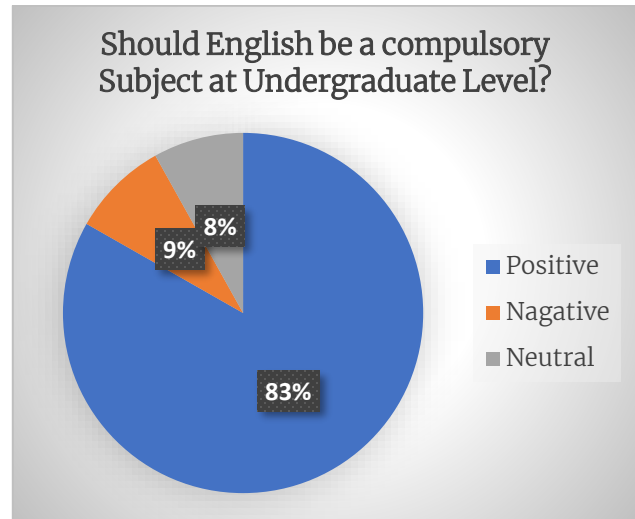
While conducting the survey, students were asked 6 closed-ended questions and were given three options for answering positive, negative and neutral. To find an in-depth view and feelings of students, they were also asked one open-ended question for descriptive answers as well. The data was statistically analyzed by finding the percentage of answers and a few other techniques.

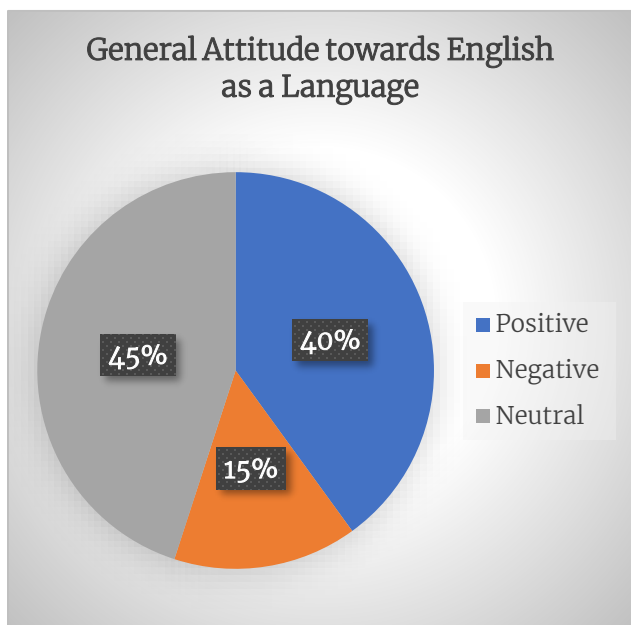
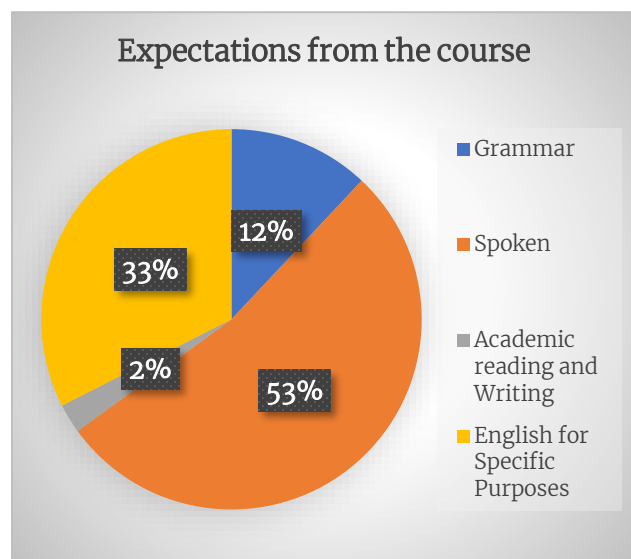
The research was not conducted in one day, but its duration was extended to the duration of

one semester. Thus this research actually is not based on mere answers to a questionnaire, but it covers the whole duration of a semester that the researcher spent with these classes. The researcher had often taken short memos of his reflections on these observations to be used later on while analyzing the data. Thus the study is retrospective in terms of time (R & Christensen, 2014). As the study was descriptive non-experimental research, the classroom behavior, average attendance in the English lectures and other classroom observations were also implied for the interpretative and descriptive analysis.

Discussion and Analysis

Students gave answers in negation as they did not feel any need for English Language learning at all. A few students were of the opinion that they have no interest in English subjects, that's why they have chosen other fields like software Engineering, Law etc. 1 student had the view that we can learn English later on as well right now we should focus on our major subjects. Most of the students find the syllabus or content too boring and too typical, and things which they are being taught have already been taught to them repeatedly at secondary and higher secondary education levels before they came to university. Very few students were aware of the ESP (English for Specific Purposes) and were of the opinion that they should be taught subject-specific or field-relevant English, what we call ESP.





The most common answers to these open-ended qualitative questions were about the deficiency in grammar and spoken skills in English. Students were exhausted from the fact that they had been taught English for the last 12 years of academic study as well but were never well trained practically in the grammar and spoken skills in English so they find no use in this course at the undergraduate level based on the opinion that it will again go on traditionally without giving them any practical learning of English language. Very few students talked about subject-specific English. Few students had the opinion that

English is a foreign language and is being imposed upon us.

Conclusion

The majority of the students had a negative attitude towards English subjects. They were less motivated towards it. There can be several other reasons for this which are further to be investigated. However, we need to be more focused on the learner's needs as well. To develop a positive attitude, we also need to include more practice in grammar and spoken English. Our course outlines and instructions mostly include theoretic aspects of the topic that also make it uninteresting for the learners. This depth study also revealed that students of the law were much different from students of Software Engineering. We need to develop field-relevant courses, and teaching methodologies as each department has its own academic and professional requirements for English Skills.

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