

Quantifying the English Language Attitude and Classroom Engagement Levels Among Humanities and Social Sciences Students

ABSTRACT

Keywords: English, classroom, engagement, HUMSS, language attitude, quantitative

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 Overview of the Study

The English language significantly stands as the most prominent language used for communication across the globe, being so widespread geographically that it is recognized to be the universal language of the world [1]. As a student, learning to speak in English is important due to its frequent usage in academic conversations. Being well-versed in speaking English is also deemed as an indication of one's intellectual capabilities, an ideology that tends to undermine those who are not fluent English speakers [2]. This can be a challenging thing for a lot of students who don't find themselves comfortable expressing their thoughts and ideas in class through the use of the English language, thus the fear of being regarded as ineffective English speakers can lead to hesitance of engaging in classroom discussions [3]. However, those students who can articulate themselves well in eloquent English speech

may take classroom discussions as a chance to be expressive of their ideas. This comfortability in the spoken English language can determine the level of class engagement that a student partakes in.

Analyzing the global scope of the problem, study findings in Pontianak, Indonesia, states that students are challenged by lack of self-confidence and linguistic problems involving grammar (22.16%) and pronunciation (16.25%) in speaking English for academic conversations [4]. Meanwhile, in the Philippines, students have confirmed that committing verbal mistakes when speaking in English raises their fear of being made fun of [5]. This can create a linguistic insecurity that may put a barrier to the expression of their ideas in classroom discussions. A descriptive-correlational study conducted in the year 2019 in Davao Del Norte found that students demonstrate low levels of proficiency surrounding English comprehension, fluency, grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation [6]. Low English proficiency may be an issue as students face limitations in communicating with other students and establishing a strong engagement to English-related academic subjects.

Failing to recognize language-use as a factor in a student's motivation to take part in their classes could deteriorate the quality and efficiency of classroom discussions. While various studies have investigated the English reading-and-writing proficiency skills of students among many educational institutions, focusing upon how the English language attitude of HUMSS students correlates to their classroom engagement particularly in the educational institution of Mapua Malayan Colleges Mindanao, is an area that is yet to be ventured. Ultimately, the overall purpose of this research is to examine the general attitude of HUMSS students on the English language and to determine whether it influences the participation they exemplify within classroom settings.

1.2 Theoretical Framework

This research is anchored majorly on two theories: firstly, the *Social Interactionist Theory on Language Acquisition* which discusses that social interactions have the capability to shape linguistic attitude and approaches [7]. For example, if a student speaks English and receives praise from his social circle (peers, family, teachers), he may begin to perceive a more positive attitude on the English language [8]. *Secondly, the Student Involvement Theory (SIT)*, proposed by Astin (1984), dictates that student participation involves the investment of their focus and energy on certain activities that they find relatable [9]. In a study conducted in 2018, research results suggested that student involvement not only involves the physical aspect of student participation, but the psychological effort exerted as well [10].

1.3 Related Literature and Studies

1.3.1 English as the Universal Language

When linguists decide to qualify a language as "universal," they consider how largely this language is used by people across the globe [11]. Thus, being so geographically widespread and known, this categorizes the English language as the universal language of today's society. Global statistics have dictated that roughly 1.35 billion people or more than 15% of the world's population speak English. As the world of technology also helps progress the sphere of business, commerce, and travel, English serves as the common bridge that maintains international relationships [12]. This construct surrounding the English language can have its advantages and disadvantages: for one, having English as the universal language provides stability; it allows various nations to utilize it as a strategic tool not only for communication, but unification and connecting gaps as well [13].

1.3.2 English Language Within Academic Environments

English is most often taught as a second language among many educational institutions, and with it being the universal language, it allows both students and teachers access to a wider range of learning materials. According to a study conducted by Somblingo and Alieto, they discovered that the use of the English language is preferred by 1,054 Filipino elementary teachers [14]. Demonstrating basic level English skills is also expected from students by the time they reach secondary education, or more commonly known as high school in the Philippines [15]. In a comprehensive quantitative study conducted in 2022, the researcher identified the proficiency levels of senior high school students within eight (8) categories: namely, noun, pronoun, verb, adjective, adverb, preposition, conjunction, and interjection. He recorded a mean average of 26.7 (high proficiency), and thus concluded that while the respondents are

“Proficient English Users,” the results imply that proper use of grammar and accurate words are still an issue, which could be of persistent problem to learners [16].

1.3.3 English Language Attitude and Class Participation of Students

Language attitude refers to how an individual views or reacts to a certain variety of language. As such, in a situation where one is eager to learn more about a specific language, they demonstrate a positive attitude. This is the same case for students who are enrolled in language studies in school, particularly English: if students find themselves more motivated in learning English, then they are also more likely to showcase active dedication and participation [17]. The study findings of Imsa-ard (2020) revealed that while Thai EFL students project high levels of motivation in learning English, they are subjected to English classes that don't suffice their needs nor provide them with linguistic skills that they can use in day-to-day life situations [18]. Meanwhile, in a study by Kabigting and Nanud (2020), wherein they assessed the students' English classroom levels of anxiety, they developed the conclusion that most Filipino students neither affirm nor deny their English anxiety levels, further explaining that this may be because the respondents have relatively neutral expectations regarding language-related performances or tasks [19]. Another research conducted in the Philippine region also found that students display high motivation in learning the English language, noting that their positive English language attitude becomes an effective catalyst to their utilization of English beyond classroom settings but also across real-life contexts [20].

1.3.4 English Language and Engagement Among HUMSS Students

The Humanities and Social Sciences (HUMSS) strand is regarded as the more language-and-communication oriented among the academic tracks, with their educational program catered towards honing writing and linguistic skills. Following the results of the study conducted by Canceran and Temporal (2018), they reported that Grade 12 HUMSS students showcase generally positive attitudes of speaking English. Similarly, in the study of De Vera (2018), their findings discussed that HUMSS students demonstrate “good” performance levels in their English listening and speaking skills [21]. Meanwhile, Kabigting and Nanud (2020) assessed the possible levels of English language classroom anxiety of Grade 12 HUMSS students and its impact on their class performance and concluded that there was in fact a significant correlation between the English class performance of the respondents and their perceived anxiety in English-related subjects.

1.3.5 Affective Learning Engagement in Classroom Settings

The Affective Learning Engagement of an individual refers to how their internal emotional aspects are connected to the effort they invest in certain tasks [22]. Having the personal interest to engage and immerse oneself in discussions, performances, and various activities relates to the way they perceive the efficacy and enjoyment they can get from doing these task [23]. In classroom set-ups, learners who demonstrate more positive emotions equally showcase higher levels of participation. This participation may be further influenced by factors such as self-esteem, peers, educators, parents, and the overall classroom environment [24]. As affective learning can be associated with having a sufficient learning environment, the rise of the COVID-19 pandemic put a strain on a lot of students' affective learning [25]. According to a study by Hollister et al., (2022) investigating the online learning engagement of students during the pandemic, they reported that online lectures saw a decrease on 72% of the respondents' engagement and attendance, affected by their lack of connection with their peers and instructors [26].

1.3.6 Behavioral Learning Engagement in Classroom Settings

Behavioral learning engagement entails the actions, manners, and etiquette showcased during learning that may either result in the success or hindrance of one's learning journey [22]. It is the observable effort and persistence of a student to learn and accomplish their tasks [27]. Hand-raising is one of the things most often associated with engaged behavior in the classroom, and even considered as an indicator of a student's academic achievement [28]. However, there are various factors that may influence a student's behavior in the classroom environment. In a study by Stevens (2020) entitled, “Behavioral Engagement of Students with Emotional Behavioral Disorders,” she emphasized that it is still a challenge for some educational institutions to abolish a ‘one size fits all’ approach to teaching, as some

instructive strategies may deem ineffective for some students [29]. Bullying, as revealed by Najam and Kashif (2018), is also a factor that leads to the hesitance of aggravated students to participate in class, due to losing confidence in an insecure classroom environment and ultimately disconnecting from their studies [30].

1.3.7 Cognitive Learning Engagement in Classroom Settings

The third aspect of student engagement is cognitive learning engagement. Cognitive learning engagement refers to the purposeful and conscious intention to comprehend information in order to translate it into a higher level of understanding that may be applied to real-life situations [22]. Successfully utilizing cognitive engagement means being able to bring their inside-classroom learnings to the outside world, with an observable demonstration of eagerness, willingness, and motivation to communicate and interact [31]. However, cognitive learning is deeply interconnected to reality and interaction, thus an individual develops more cognitive skills if they are immersed into the outside world [32]. According to Kew and Tasir (2021), students indicated low levels of cognitive engagement during an e-learning set-up [33]. This statement can be supported by the research findings concluding that students find themselves more engaged during face-to-face classes than the online learning modality shaped by the global pandemic [34].

2. METHODOLOGY

This study utilized a correlational research design, a non-experimental method that allows statistical data to gather and measure the relative degrees between the associated variables [35]. This research design enabled to determine an existing relationship present between the HUMSS students' English language attitude and overall classroom engagement. The research gathered a total number of 150 respondents, all of whom were Humanities and Social Sciences students enrolled within the senior high school department of the university. The respondents were required to complete the ¹ESAQ and ²SESQ questionnaires: the ¹*English-Speaking Attitude Questionnaire* (adapted from a previous study conducted by [5] Canceran & Temporal in 2018) aimed to identify how students felt towards the application of the English language across different contexts, while the ²*Student Engagement in Schools Questionnaire* (adapted from a previous study conducted by [36] Hart et al., in 2011) sought to analyze student participation within classroom set-ups divided into three indicators; *Affective Learning Engagement* focusing on their personal interest to engage, *Behavioral Learning Engagement* focusing on their observable manners that display motivation, and *Cognitive Learning Engagement* focusing on their intention to apply learnings into real-life contexts. The questionnaires were based on a Likert-scale system that ranged from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Ultimately, the survey results' interpretation followed the standard mean interpretation table:

TABLE 1
(Mean Interpretation Table)

Rating Scale	Description	Interpretation
4.21 – 5.00	Very High	Students strongly express very positive levels that indicate strong approval
3.41 – 4.20	High	Students express positive levels that indicate a show of approval

2.61 – 3.40	Moderate	Students neither directly indicate nor deny approval showing neutral levels
1.81 – 2.60	Low	Students express low levels of approval
1.00 – 1.80	Very Low	Students strongly express very low levels that indicate weak approval

TABLE 1: *This table served as the basis for interpreting the data gathered through the questionnaires.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 HUMSS Students' English Language Attitude

Table 2
(English Language Attitude of HUMSS Students)

Variable	Mean	SD	Verbal Description	Interpretation
1. You are anxious about being made fun of when you make mistakes in English.	3.33	1.084	Moderate	Students neither directly indicate nor deny approval, showing neutral levels.
2. You enjoy speaking in English.	4.10	0.857	High	Students express positive levels that indicate approval.
3. English allows you to be more detailed and descriptive with sharing ideas to the class.	4.10	0.925	High	Students express positive levels that indicate approval.
4. You understand the teacher's lessons more if they discuss in English.	4.20	0.827	High	Students express positive levels that indicate approval.
5. Being able to speak English	4.00	0.886	High	Students express positive levels

accomplishes a feeling of success.

that indicate approval.

OVERALL	3.95	0.916	High	Students express positive levels that indicate approval.
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TABLE 2: *This table shows the results of the adapted English-Speaking Attitude Questionnaire (ESAQ).

In assessing the English language attitude of HUMSS students, the results show that while students display moderate or neutral levels of anxiety towards English, gathering an average mean of 3.33, they are more likely to have a preference towards utilizing it for its academic purposes. Students admit to having a better comprehension of the lessons if their teachers use English as a mode of communication for classroom discussions, showcasing a mean of 4.20 (*High*). In a statement that prompts their perceived enjoyment in the use of English as a language itself, HUMSS students also express high levels of approval (4.10). Overall, the results dictate that HUMSS students appear to demonstrate a generally positive attitude towards the English language.

The results show that most HUMSS students neither confirm nor deny feelings of anxiety in using English, which aligns with the results of Kabigting and Nanud's study (2020) concluding that students usually report neutral levels of anxiety towards the English language. In another statement that aimed to assess whether HUMSS students were able to develop a better understanding of their lessons if their teachers utilized English, students revealed affirmative answers. The final results validate the positive English language of HUMSS students, further supported by the similar findings of Canceran and Temporal (2018), which verify that various HUMSS students exhibit high levels of positivity in English language-use. The overall data imply that HUMSS students take preference and enjoyment on using English as a mode of communication within their classroom environments. This narrative can be connected to how most of the classes under the Humanities and Social Sciences cluster are curated towards honing English development and skills, allowing students to navigate the English language across both academic and non-academic pursuits.

3.2 HUMSS Students' Classroom Engagement

Table 3

(Classroom Engagement Levels of HUMSS Students)

Variable	Mean	SD	Verbal Description	Interpretation
1. <i>Affective Learning Engagement</i>	4.03	0.5968	High	Students express positive levels that indicate approval
2. <i>Behavioral Learning</i>	4.04	0.6663	High	Students express positive levels

Engagement				that indicate approval
3. Cognitive Learning Engagement	4.21	0.5721	Very High	Students strongly express positive levels that indicate very strong approval
OVERALL	4.09	0.5355	High	Students express positive levels that indicate approval.

TABLE 3: *This table shows the results of the adapted Student Engagement in Schools Questionnaire (SESQ).

The engagement levels among HUMSS students are measured and categorized into three main variables, each dedicated towards specific contexts of engagement. The Affective Learning Engagement shows an average mean of 4.03 (High). The Behavioral Learning Engagement gathered 4.04 (High). The Cognitive Learning Engagement, with an average mean of 4.21 (Very High), displayed the highest results among the three. The overall results reveal that HUMSS students are very engaged in various aspects within their classroom environment.

The results display the high levels of Affective Learning Engagement among HUMSS students, suggesting how personal interest greatly impacts learning, thus its affectivity. The Behavioral Learning Engagement results, pertaining to the observable actions exhibited by students, are aligned with the notion proposed by Boheim et al., (2020), in which engaged classroom behavior reflects positively on overall academic achievement. The results of the Cognitive Learning Engagement revealed the highest levels among the three indicators, in which the researchers assessed how the respondents interrelate their classroom learnings to real-life situations. This is comparable to Gorski's study (2021) which presented that engaged students have the capability to purposefully apply and contextualize classroom discussions to the demands of the outside world.

3.3 Correlational Analysis

Table 4

(Correlation Analysis Between HUMSS Students' English Language Attitude and Classroom Engagement)

	Classroom Engagement Levels			
	r	P-value	Decision on Significance	Decision on H ₀
English Language Attitude	.414	.000	Significant	Reject H ₀

TABLE 4: *This table presents the correlation analysis between the two previously presented tables.

Table 4 presents the results of the correlation analysis between the data of the English language attitude and classroom engagement levels among the HUMSS students of Mapua Malayan Colleges

Mindanao. The corresponding results with an r-value of .414 and P-value of .000 concludes that there is a significant relationship between the English language attitude of HUMSS students and their expressed levels of classroom engagement. These results qualify to reject the hypothesis (H_0) initially proposed in the study.

The findings of the correlation analysis are coherent with the data of Sengkey and Galag (2018) which revealed that students who are motivated in learning or utilizing English are also more likely to demonstrate active participation. This affirms the positive English language attitude results and high engagement levels demonstrated by the respondents. Kabigting and Nanud's research (2020) stated that English language-induced anxiety impacts classroom engagement, but with the neutral levels of anxiety displayed by the HUMSS students towards the English language, their engagement within classroom contextualized settings is therefore unaffected.

The English language attitude evidently influences the classroom engagement levels of HUMSS students at a directly proportional rate. The high positivity exemplified in their perceived attitude towards the English language constitutes to the equally high results reflected in their classroom engagement levels. This unveils a significant correlation that upholds pre-existing studies and literature, as well as the common social construct surrounding the idea that HUMSS students deploy skillfulness in utilizing English as a language for the academic sphere.

4. CONCLUSION

As an academic strand held with such high regard for being well-versed in the English language, the students of Humanities and Social Sciences evidently showcase their positive attitude towards English as a communicative language that influences their similarly positive classroom engagement levels. The study's major findings highlight the significant impact of students' language attitude to the participative behavior they demonstrate. Through a correlational research design, the study confirms that HUMSS students agree to feeling a sense of enjoyment and efficiency in using the English language. Respondents also agree to functioning in classroom environments with highly engaged behaviors. Overall, this study concludes that the implications of these two variables address the present correlation between the English language attitude and classroom engagement levels of HUMSS students in the institution of Mapua Malayan Colleges Mindanao.

CONSENT

All the respondents were given the opportunity to answer the online questionnaires anonymously or under any preferred 'nickname.' The respondents were also provided with consent letters which presented the terms and conditions of their approval to partake in this study, assuring that they can withhold participation at any given time.

ETHICAL APPROVAL

All the respondents were given the opportunity to answer the online questionnaires anonymously or under any preferred 'nickname.' The respondents were also provided with consent letters which presented the terms and conditions of their approval to partake in this study, assuring that they can withhold participation at any given time.

Disclaimer (Artificial intelligence)

Author(s) hereby declare that NO generative AI technologies such as Large Language Models (ChatGPT, COPILOT, etc) and text-to-image generators have been used during writing or editing of manuscripts.

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