



## Analysis of the Afghan Refugee Students' Attitudes towards English language and English Language Learning: A Case Study of KPK, Pakistan

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**Abstract-** A quantitative study, based on survey design, analyzed attitudes of students from Afghan Refugees settled in Pakistan since 1979- towards English and English language learning in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK), Pakistan, to determine their success rate and learning level. Out of the population of all such students studying in different educational institutions of KPK, 38 participants were selected through census sampling technique. The data was collected through validated questionnaire based on five-point Likert scales and analyzed through computer software, Microsoft Excel and SPSS. Percentages calculated for all the items in questionnaire were then interpreted and explained. It transpired that although they think English to be the language of the terrorist nations, yet they do not think they should dislike it and stop learning it. The results showed that the respondents have positive behavioral, cognitive and emotive attitudes towards English and English language learning which, according to the recommendations, should be utilized by their teachers and parents in motivating them to speak English boldly, irrespective of having the fear of making mistakes and feeling shy.

**Keywords:** Attitudes, Learning, English, Afghan Refugees, Foreign Language

### I. INTRODUCTION

English, considered as the language of the world, is used throughout the world for day-to-day communication and trade purposes. It works as a Lingua Franca for those who have no language in common. English is also the language of social media throughout the world and we see it written in newspapers and magazines and hear it on television and radio. All these things help English getting established as a global language (Crystal, 2003). English is the native language of many people living in various countries of the world especially in United Kingdom (UK) and United States of America (USA). Most others, whose mother tongue is not English, learn it either as a second or as a foreign language. It is taught and learnt at educational institutions globally. Some people learn it for pursuing higher studies, while some for trade and other purposes.

In Pakistan, English has got the status of powerful language compared with the national language Urdu because in offices and educational institutions it is widely used (Shamim, 2011). Among the multicultural societies in the various provinces of Pakistan, Afghan Refugees also lives here. They migrated to Pakistan from Afghanistan during Soviet War in 1979 and settled in almost all the provinces of Pakistan. Majority of Afghan Refugees live in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. They have settled their camps and homes in Peshawar, Kohat, Hangu, Haripur and Dera Ismail Khan Districts of KP. When they migrated to Pakistan, they had very poor educational background. Soon they started getting education and sending their children to schools, colleges

and universities. The most severe problem they faced was that of language. They had Pashto and Persian as their mother tongues.

English is the native language of the agencies, who invaded their homeland and forced them leave their mother land and migrate to another country. On the one hand, it is highly necessary for a person to have somehow acquaintance with English language for becoming successful; on the other hand, the Afghan Refugees have some bad and unpleasant experiences with English language, which act as barriers in getting command over the language. Some of the refugees seem to be against this language for being the language of its invaders. UNHCR (2015) states that some of the refugees have learnt English language. The current study attempts to investigate the attitudes of Afghan refugee students towards learning English language at secondary level in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KPK).

### **1.1. Statement of Problem**

Various studies posited that a person's attitude towards a language determines the success rate of learning that language. A learner with positive attitude towards target language learns it very easily and quickly. On the contrary, a learner having negative attitude towards target language and target culture face issues in mastering target language. Afghan refugee students studying in Pakistan educational institutions encounter English language on daily basis. This study attempted analyzing Afghan refugee students' attitudes towards English and learning English in KPK.

### **1.2. Significance of the Study**

The study is significant in the sense that this type of study has not been conducted till date in Pakistan. The study revealed the educational background of Afghan Refugees and their attitudes towards learning English. So, it contributed to the existing body of literature. Moreover, it will also help the future researchers who want to conduct this type of study on large scale.

### **1.3. Delimitation of the Study**

Due to limited time and resources, the study had been delimited to only Afghan Refugees who live KPK province of Pakistan.

## **II. LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1 Definitions of Attitude**

Various dictionaries define attitude as a settled way of thinking or feeling about something. The feeling or opinion about something shows one's attitude towards it. It is looking at something or perceiving it positively or negatively (Oxford and Cambridge dictionaries). The definition of attitude popular in the formal psychological studies is that it is an intellectual and neural condition of willingness, sequenced by practice, exertive a commanded or vibrant impact on the person's reactions to every matter among which it is associated (Ewan, 2010). Psychology's experts describe attitude as a scholarly inclination to assess things in a guaranteed manner. It comprises assessment of persons, items, issues and occasions etc. The assessment of this type is many times optimistic (encouraging) or depressing (discouraging), though it may also be neutral at times. As an example, we have diverse feelings about a specific being or issue i.e., sometimes we like or dislike it. The researchers recommend that there are many elements that construct attitude like,

- i. An Emotional Component:** A type of attitude that is related to emotional component like how an object, individual, issue or occasion make that person feel.
- ii. A Cognitive Component:** A type of attitude that mainly focuses on the cognitive aspect, like a person's considerations (thoughts) and convictions (beliefs) about the subject are termed as cognitive attitudes.
- iii. A Behavioral Component:** A type of attitude that affects one's behavior, like the way of mentality that impacts the person's conduct (behavior).

Of the two types of attitudes, unequivocal attitudes, also called explicit attitudes, are those that we are intentionally scrupulous of and that unambiguously impact our practices (behaviors) and convictions (beliefs); whereas, implicit attitudes are oblivious, yet at the same time affect our convictions and practices. Both, implicit and explicit attitudes, influence individuals' deeds in various ways without resolutely taking up with each other, in spite of the fact that, at times, they are. Their relationship is ineffectively understood (Smith & Mackie, 2007).

## **2.2 Attitudes and Language Learning**

Eshghinejad (2016) stated that attitudes towards learning, besides opinions and beliefs, have an apparent influence on students' behaviors and therefore on their performance. It is argued that students having positive beliefs about language learning are inclined to increase more positive attitude towards it. They have high motivation and interest in language learning; but, student with negative beliefs may fall victim to anxiety, low cognitive achievement, and negative attitudes. According to him the objective of education has become getting high grades in which the teachers tend to overlook students' creativity, understanding, and needs. The instructor's original role in teaching English as a foreign language is to convey information to the learners effectively. Very little knowledge exists about the best strategies to develop the students not just cognitively but also behaviorally and emotionally.

It is argued that language learning is considered as the foundation stone of human knowing the language. In the context of foreign language learning, a variety of causes affect the learning process like attitudes, motivation, aptitudes, anxiety, learning achievements, intelligence, age, personalities, etc. The learner's attitude is one of the most important factors that impact on language learning.

Gomleksiz (2010) quantitatively studied evaluation of students' attitudes towards English Language learning in terms of several variables, in Turkey; he found that the students have positive attitudes towards learning English. Moreover, he suggested conducting further large-scale research, so that majority students' attitudes towards learning English may be investigated. Kisginm & Arsalan (2015) also conducted research on students' attitudes towards English Language in High Schools in Turkey; they found students of the foreign language schools better than the other high schools. Moreover, Ahmed (2015) found that most of the students had positive attitudes towards learning English, whereas his research data also revealed that a reasonable number of students have also negative feelings and fear regarding classroom instructions in English, because of their poor educational background. Gajalakshmi (2013) conducted research in India and found that the male students have high attitudes towards learning than females. Urban area students have high attitudes towards learning English than rural area students and the students of co-educational schools have higher attitudes than those of others. Moreover, the students of Government Schools have also high attitudes towards learning English than that of Private Schools.

Contrary to Gajalakshmi's (2013) results in India, Munir and Rehman (2015) found that Pakistani students have negative attitudes towards learning English as foreign language but female students had higher learning attitudes towards learning English than male students. Moreover, Soomro (2016) studied the attitudes of undergraduate learners of English, as a foreign language, at two universities in the Pakistani provinces of Sindh and Baluchistan; he found that the majority of their students held positive attitudes towards learning and speaking English. Moreover, those students also declared English as not a threat to their culture, mother tongue or religious values and they had very aspirational attitude to the learning and use of English.

The review of the studies shows that the attitude of students varies, being different at different places; somewhere, attitude regarding learning English as a foreign language is positive and somewhere negative, depending upon situation, time, place and resources etc. The current study analyzes the attitude of Afghan refugee students towards English Language and its learning for the first time.

### **III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1 Research Design**

The study made use of quantitative research design to analyse the attitudes of Afghan refugee students towards English and leaning English at KPK.

### 3.2 Population of the Study

The population of the study constituted all the Afghan Refugee students studying at various educational institutions of KPK, Pakistan.

### 3.3 Sample and Sampling Technique

Very limited number of Afghan refugees are enrolled in educational institutions of KPK; so, non-probability sampling technique was adopted to select participants for the study. Census sampling technique was used to select all students who were enrolled in educational institutions and were somehow exposed to English language. 38 participants were selected for the study.

### 3.4 Data Collection Method

As the study is based on survey method, questionnaire was used as a tool for data collection. The survey was carried out through questionnaire based on five points Likert Scale ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. In order to ensure the validity and reliability of the questionnaire, the researcher used the previously validated questionnaires which were used by Eshghinejad (2016) and Soomro (2016). The questionnaire was comprised of 30 items in which the first 10 were from the behavioral aspect of the attitudes, second 10 were from cognitive aspect of attitudes and the last 10 were from emotive aspect of attitudes.

### 3.5 Data Analysis Method

The data collected through questionnaire was analyzed by using computer software Microsoft Excel and SPSS (Statistical Package for Social Sciences). The data was presented in descriptive manner in the form of tables. Frequencies and percentages were calculated for all the items in the questionnaire. So, in this way the attitudes of the students towards learning English were analyzed and the results were drawn out.

## IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

The results of the study have been presented in the following tables where percentages have been shown for each item. Moreover, the results of 'strongly agree' and 'agree' have been added and shown in a single column under the title 'agree'. Similarly, the results of 'strongly disagree' and 'disagree' have also been added and shown in one column under the title 'disagree'.

**Table 1. Respondents' Emotive Attitudes towards English Language and English Language Learning**

S. No.	Statements	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Total
01	I don't like to listen to English because it is the language of the enemies.	21.1 %	2.6 %	76.3 %	100
02	English language makes me remember my hometown.	54.8 %	0 %	45.2 %	100
03	English language is a threat for my own maternal language.	64.8 %	0 %	35.2 %	100
04	I don't try to learn English because my elders hate it.	5.3 %	0 %	94.8 %	100
05	English language is the language of the terrorist nations.	92.1 %	0 %	7.9 %	100
06	I don't feel fear when I have to answer question in English.	68.4 %	0 %	31.6%	100

07	I learn English because my parents force me to do so.	31.6 %	0 %	68.5 %	100
08	The people in my society discourage me to learn English.	78.9 %	2.6 %	18.4%	100
09	I do not like English because it is a foreign language.	34.2 %	5.3 %	60.5 %	100
10	I do not like to learn English because it takes me away from my own native language and culture.	35.2 %	0 %	60.5%	100

The students' responses indicate that they are not against English language and entertain positive attitudes towards it. It is generally said that English is the language of the enemies who attacked Muslim countries such as Iraq, Palestine and Afghanistan but the students enrolled in educational institutions of Pakistan do not think so. The above table shows that only 21.1 percent of the students think of English so, while the rest consider it just a language without relating it to any agency. 54 percent participants responded that speaking of English brings to their minds their hometowns invaded by English speaking powers. International language jeopardizes existence of local languages and gets expanded to education, occupation and media. The more a foreign language, especially English, gets entered into new domains of life, the more it becomes a threat to regional and local languages. Majority (64.8%) of Afghan refugee students considers it a threat to their mother tongues and local languages, but still learns it. They think right because English, having international significance and status, has killed many languages around the world. Afghans are Pashtuns and Pashtuns are famous for respecting and obeying their elders. However, in the case of English language learning, excepting the 5 %, influenced by elders, the Afghan refugee students do not think they should discontinue it if their elders hate it. Afghan refugee students, like all other Muslims, consider themselves brothers to all other Muslims of the world. Palestine, Iraq and Afghanistan are Muslim countries, devastated by the English-speaking agencies and nations, considered terrorists by Muslims.

**Table 2. Behavioral Attitudes of the Respondents towards English Language and English Language Learning**

S. No.	Statements	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Total
11	I like to learn English on daily basis.	87 %	13%	0%	100
12	Studying English helps me to have a good position in society.	89.5 %	5.3%	5.3%	100
13	I usually study the subject English more than other subjects at home.	55.3 %	0%	44.7%	100
14	When I miss English class, I do not ask my friends about homework given by teacher.	21.1%	0%	78.9%	100
15	I study English because it helps me develop my personality.	94.7%	2.6%	2.6%	100
16	I practice speaking English because I want to become a good speaker of English.	68.5%	0%	31.5%	100
17	When I start speaking English in front of other students, I feel shy and embarrassed.	71.1%	2.6%	26.3%	100
18	When I see a person speaking English, I become very enthusiastic.	89.5%	7.9%	2.6%	100
19	When I encounter some English words, I try to learn them on the spot.	92.1%	2.6%	5.3%	100
20	I listen to my teacher very attentively when he teaches us English in classroom.	100%	0%	0%	100

The results of table 1 show their positive attitudes towards learning English. In response to the item no.1, most of the students agree that they like to practice learning English at their homes. Moreover, in response to item no. 2, a very high number of students agree that studying English helps them to have good position in the society. More than half believe they usually study English more than other subjects at home. Greater number of students disagree that when they miss English class, they do not ask their friends for homework on what the teacher has taught in the class. This shows that they are very careful about their class of English subject. Almost all agree that they study English subject because they think it will develop their personality. More than half agree that they study English subject for becoming good speakers of English. However, more than two-third of the students also agree to feeling embarrassed, and hence ashamed, when they start speaking English.

**Table 3. Cognitive Attitudes of the Respondents towards English and English Language Learning**

S. No.	Statements	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Total
21	It is easy for me to learn English.	76.3 %	0 %	23.7 %	100
22	When I start practicing English, I get bored.	18.5%	0 %	81.6 %	100
23	I want to be good at English because it will help me in understanding other subjects.	86.8%	5.3 %	7.9 %	100
24	The students who speak English are considered to be very talented.	94.8 %	5.3 %	0 %	100
25	I get more knowledge when I study English.	94.8 %	5.3 %	0 %	100
26	I study the subject 'English' just to pass the exam.	7.9 %	2.6 %	89.5 %	100
27	I am not satisfied with my performance in English subject and its role in my overall academic achievement.	39.5 %	2.6 %	57.9 %	100
28	I get more marks in subjects other than English.	60.5 %	7.9 %	31.6 %	100
29	Studying English makes me able to participate actively in classroom activities.	100 %	0 %	0 %	100
30	Studying English makes me able to communicate effectively in English with other students and teachers.	97.3 %	0 %	2.6 %	100

This table shows the respondents' cognitive attitudes towards learning English. Majority of them consider it easier for them to learn English and consider English subject not difficult. Moreover, most of the students disagreed to the statement that when they start practicing learning English, they get bored. Similarly, most of the respondents are of the view that they try to learn English because they want to be good at it so that it may help them in understanding other subjects as well. The students who speak English are very talented, the participants think. Majority of the students disagree to the notion that English should be studied just for the purpose of passing the exam. More than half of the students disagree to the statement that they are not satisfied with their performance at English subject and its role their overall academic achievement. They are of the view that in their performance, English plays a very momentous role. Moreover, all the participants think that studying English makes them able to participate actively in classroom activities. Resultantly, they get more input as compared to other students and learn more than students not participating in class. Similarly, almost all the students opine that studying English enables them to communicate effectively with the teachers and students. The result in table 2 shows that students have positive attitudes towards learning English cognitively.

## V. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The current study attempted to find out the attitudes of Afghan Refugee students towards English language and English Language Learning. The results of the study revealed that the students have very positive attitudes towards learning English. The respondents, having migrated to Pakistan in 1979, have developed very good mind-set towards getting education and strong inclination towards learning English. The earlier old immigrants from Afghanistan had very poor educational background but now they have also developed positive attitude towards education, English language, and its learning. They consider it indispensable for living in the present world and do not hesitate in sending their children for getting modern education in educational institutions of Pakistan. Those having born in Pakistan have no less strong attitudes towards learning English and getting knowledge than Pakistanis. Currently they are enrolled in various educational institutions in Pakistan for getting education. Especially, the respondents of this study living in KPK have very high level of interest in learning English language. They daily practice speaking English at their homes, and go to schools for learning it from their teachers.

This study revealed that Afghan refugee students have positive attitude towards English language and English language learning, which seems to contradict the study carried out by Munir & Rehman (2015) in Lahore. They found out that students have negative attitudes towards learning English. Moreover, they have also found out that the girl students were having higher learning attitudes toward learning English than the boy students. Soomro (2016), conducted his research on undergraduate students of two universities of Balochistan and Sindh, and concluded that the students have positive attitude towards leaning English language. He reported that, due to its importance, the students were forced to learn it for competing with the external world. The Afghan refugee students also think that English language enables them to compete with the world on every ground. In the same line, Ali's (2006) study found that non-Afghan general postgraduate students have positive attitude towards English language. Their familiarity with English language was attributed to their frequent contact with it on daily basis since their matriculation, which resulted in the development of their affirmative attitude towards it. The Afghan refugee students, though new to the English language, held positive attitude towards it. Hussain, Shahid and Zaman (2011) found out that female students are good at learning English language because they feel no anxiety when they use English language. But it was conducted in Lahore, which is a highly developed city and its females are well to do and exposed to English since their childhood; whereas, Afghan female students' number is too low in educational institutions in KPK; they are not that good at English language, due to insufficient exposure to it. So, this study contradicts the results of the study conducted by Hussain, Shahid and Zaman.

Hussain, Shahid and Zaman (2011) said that the students having positive attitudes towards a language must be encouraged to learn it because such students are very good at learning language. The present study shows that the Afghan refugee students have developed positive attitude towards English language and English language learning. They should be encouraged by the parents to learn it and government should provide full opportunities to them for learning it easily. The study brought to light very significant aspects of the relationship between language learning and attitude. The study revealed that the Afghan refugee students, despite the bad experiences with the native speakers of English language, try to learn the language and they have no negative feelings towards it. No one has conducted any sort of study on the Afghan refugee students; so, it is a sort of initiative for the researchers to focus on Afghan refugees in terms of research. This study concludes that Afghan refugee students enrolled in different private and government educational institutions have positive behavioral, cognitive and emotive attitude towards English language and English language learning.

### **Recommendation for future research**

Due to limited time and sources, the researcher delimited this study to KPK province of Pakistan but recommends that it should be carried on country level. Moreover, attitude is something that is not static but is something that varies from time to time and from place to place. In future, this type of study may bring highly valid and reliable results regarding attitudes of people towards learning English.

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