Moderating Age and Sex as predictors of Students' Attitudes and Academic Performance in English

Erwin Lesbos Purcia [1]

[1] Dean, School of Graduate Studies, Dr. Carlos S. Lanting College, Quezon City, Philippines; erwinpurcia@yahoo.com; erwinpurcia@lanting.ph.education

Abstract: The attitudes towards English of the STEM-12A students of the Senior High School Program of Dr. Carlos S. Lanting College for the school year 2019-2020 were identified, categorized and correlated with their academic performance in their English subject. Moreover, the profile of the respondents in terms of age and sex was also determined and moderated to their attitudes towards English and their academic performance in their English subject. The descriptive-correlational method of research was used with forty (40) student-respondents who were chosen through total or complete enumeration. A researcher-made questionnaire with an attitude towards English checklist was administered to identify the profile/personal variables of the respondents. The findings showed that there is no significant relationship that exists between the students' attitude towards English and their academic performance. Results dictated that the academic performance among the respondents was not affected by all means with their attitudes toward English as a subject area. Moreover, results revealed that age and gender did not moderate nor affect the relationship of students' attitudes towards English with their academic performance in English subject.

Keywords: *Attitudes, English Language, Academic Performance, Moderator Analysis*

1. Introduction

Learning English as an L2 (second language) is not an easy task. According to Brown, to master the English language, learners have to be adequately exposed to all of the four basic skills, namely listening, speaking, reading and writing. Language teaching in this country is currently focusing on the teaching and learning of the four language skills (now five adding viewing via the implementation of the K-12 basic education program). However, the standard of English among Filipino children is on the decline despite learning English for several years. Filipino students are still weak in English, especially in these macro-skills [Brown, 2008].

In the Philippines, the English language has been considered the most influential spoken language in both educational and commercial facets of society. Any school encourages the use of English in all of their forms of exchanging thoughts and ideas with which they can be understood by many. As an indispensable form of spoken communication and as a global language, English plays a vital role among people who seek a greener pasture and would take lucrative positions abroad. Moreover, English as a second language serves as the portal to susceptibly open greater opportunities among Filipinos who opt to create names in their chosen fields of expertise [Cummins, 2013].

In writing, for instance, problems in tenses, prepositions and weak vocabulary are the most common and frequent type of language difficulty that are committed by learners. Since grammar is seen only as a means to an end, some learners tend to re-emphasize its importance and, in the process, they make many more mistakes. The learners usually face difficulties in learning the grammatical aspects of the Target Language (TL), such as in subject-verb agreement, the use of prepositions, articles and the use of correct tense [Marshall, 2012]. In speaking on the other hand, since English is a second language, second language learners find much difficulty in pronouncing words correctly via the neutral accent. Filipinos even fail to construct sentences in their lingua franca much more then are expected in the context of

learning English.

Consequently, teachers have to recognize that "learning ability varies from person to person". Also, "all language learning is based on continual exposure, hypothesizing and, even with the correct hypothesis, testing and reinforcing the ideas behind them". Therefore, identifying students' attitude towards English is the best tool for describing and explaining the difficulties made by speakers of other languages. By investigating students' attitudes, it provided a means to help teachers recognize the importance of language acquisition difficulty as one of the challenging areas in teaching English [Kennedy, 2008].

These factual pieces of information inspired the researchers to find out the attitudes of students towards English as a determinant to achieving higher academic performance in English subject. This study aimed to inform people in the academe especially the students of their attitudes towards the language and how can these affect their performance in English.

This study was geared towards determining the attitudes of the STEM-12A students towards English and how can these affect their academic performance. Specifically, this study was conducted to determine the profile of the respondents in terms of age and sex; identify the attitudes of the respondents towards English; determine the academic performance of the respondents in their English class; determine the relationship of the respondents' attitudes towards English and their academic performance, and moderate the relationship of the respondents' attitudes towards English to their academic performance with their profile in terms of age and sex.

2. Method

The present study is a descriptive-correlational investigation of the attitudes of the respondents towards English. These attitudes were determined and identified its relationship to the academic performance of the respondents which would provide the language teachers with the information needed in their teaching methodologies and classroom activities most effective for their students.

3. Respondents

The respondents of this study were the Grade 12 STEM-A students of the Senior High School Program of Dr. Carlos S. Lanting College. There are forty (40) of them in the first section arranged alphabetically mixing males with the females in the first to two rows and the succeeding rows.

4. Instrument

A questionnaire with an attitude towards English checklist was administered to identify the profile of the respondents. It was also utilized to determine the respondents' attitudes towards English. The first part asks the age, sex, and academic performance (numeric grades) in their English subject as personal variables of the respondents while the second part asks for the attitudes towards the English Language.

5. Procedure

The questionnaire was administered to the respondents to identify the frequency of their age, sex and academic performance in their English class. Embedded in the questionnaire is an attitude checklist that was distributed to determine the respondents' attitudes towards the English language. Further, after they were given time to answer the questionnaires, data were tallied.

6. Data Analysis

Ran via the SPSS, the researchers made use of frequency distribution to determine the respondents' age, sex, academic performance in their English class, and their attitudes towards the English language. After which, through simple regression analysis, the researchers identified the relationship of students' attitudes towards English and their academic performance. Finding out the relationship thereafter, the researchers ran the SPSS with moderation analysis to determine age and sex as moderator variables if they affect the relationship of both independent and dependent variables.

7. Findings and discussion

Based on the data treated and analyzed the findings revealed the following:

8. Profile of Respondents

Table 1 shows the profile of STEM 12-A students in terms of their age; table 2 depicts the frequency and percentage distribution of respondents according to sex and table 3 presents the frequency and percentage distribution of the respondents' attitude towards English as a subject matter.

8.1. Age Profile of the Respondents

Table 1. Age Profile ESEP 8-A

		Frequency	**Percent**
Valid	young	16	40.0
	adult	24	60.0
	Total	40	100.0

Table 1 presents the profile of the respondents in terms of their age. Respondents with age 14 years old were labeled as young while those who are 15 years old were classified as an adult. It can be gleaned based on the table above that out of a total number of 40 respondents, a total of 16 (40%) age 14 years old and are classified as young learners while the remaining 24 students with an accumulated percentage of 60% are categorized as adults with the age of 15 years old.

It can further be seen that only the population of adult learners reached beyond 50% percent of the total population of the class which suggests that the majority of the respondents are classified as adult learners with age 15 years old in terms of their age profile.

8.2. Sex Profile of Respondents

Table 2. Sex Profile of ESEP 8-A

		Frequency	**Percent**
Valid	male	26	65.0
	female	14	35.0
	Total	40	100.0

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Table 2 describes the frequency distribution of the respondents according to their sex. Out of a total population of 40 students for STEM-12A, 26 (65%) were determined as males while the remaining 14 were recognized as females with an accumulated percentage of 35%. The data above suggests that the majority of the respondents are males in terms of their sex profile.

8.3. Attitude of Respondents towards English

Table 3. STEM-12A Attitude Towards English

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	strongly disagree	1	2.5
	disagree	3	7.5
	undecided	11	27.5
	agree	25	62.5
	Total	40	100.0

Table 3 presents the frequency distribution of the respondents' attitude towards English as a subject matter taken from their responses. The above categorization was adapted from a ready-made checklist for measuring the attitude towards English where strongly disagree denotes the highest negative feeling towards English as subject matter down to strongly agree which dictates the highest positive attitude towards English. The data above reveals a total number of 25 (62.5%) respondents under agree, 11(27.5%) for undecided, 3(7.5%) for disagree, and 1 (2.5%) for strongly disagree respectively. The above percentage clearly explains that more than half of the total percentage of the entire class of STEM-12A have a positive attitude towards the subject matter defeating the sum percentage of 10% who has a negative attitude towards English.

Further, the data suggests that the class views English as an enjoyable and at the same time interesting subject. This can be attributed to the teacher's skill in effectively employing various pedagogical methodologies, the learning experiences, and availability of materials needed.

8.4. Academic Performance of Respondents in English Class

Table 4. Academic Performance of STEM 12-A Students in English Class

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Approaching Proficiency	18	45.0
	Proficient	22	55.0
	Total	40	100.0

Table 4 presents the academic performance of the respondents in their English subject using their general percentage average based on their respective grades in every quarter. The researcher made use of the former categories used by DepEd in categorizing the academic performance of students from Beginning to Advanced Proficiency.

It can be gleaned above that 22 (55%) is proficient and 18   (45%) are under Advanced Proficiency while no respondent was labeled as Advanced, Developing, or Beginning. Further, the data suggests that more than half of the entire population of STEM 12-A are Proficient which means that in general, the

respondents have good performance inside their English class. This performance may be attributed to factors affecting the teaching and learning process.

8.5. Significant Relationship between Respondents' Attitude towards English and their Academic Performance

The succeeding tables illustrate the tests for an existing significant relationship between the respondents' attitude towards English and their academic performance inside their English class as reflected in their general percentage average.

Table 4 Single Regression Analysis on the Significant Relationship Between Respondents' Attitude towards English and their Academic Performance

Variable	Beta	Sig.	Interpretation
Attitude towards English	0.207	0.208	Not Significant
R-Square	0.041		
Adjusted	0.016		
F-value	1.638		
sig.-value	0.208		

*   =   Significant at 0.05 level (p< .05)

**   =   Significant at .01 level (p<.01)

ns   =   Not Significant at .05 level (p> .05)

To test the existence of a significant relationship between the attitudes of the students towards English and their academic performance inside English class a single regression analysis was conducted. Results of the analysis (Table 4) showed an R-square value of 0.041 which means that only 4.1% of the variance in English performance could be explained by their attitude towards English as a subject matter.

The analysis of variance showed an F-value of 1.638 with a significance value of 0.208 which is greater than the 0.05 significance level. This means that there is no significant relationship that exists between the students' attitude towards English and their academic performance. Moreover, result dictates that the academic performance among the respondents is not affected by all means with their attitudes toward English as part of the subject areas.

Beta coefficient showed that attitude towards English ($\beta = 0.136$, p <0.05) did not significantly predict the performance of students in their English class as reflected in their general percentage average having a significance value of .208 which is greater than the 0.05 significance level for accepted margin of error. This means that the achievement of the students in their English class is not determined nor influenced by their personal beliefs and attitude towards the subject matter. Also, their attitude toward English does not serve at all as their motivation to work harder and perform better in their English class.

8.6. Respondents' Age as Moderator on the Relationship of the Respondents' Attitudes towards English to their Academic Performance

Table 5. Single Regression Analysis on the Relationship of the Respondents' Attitudes towards English to their Academic Performance using their Age Profile (Young) as Moderator

Variable	Beta	Sig.	Interpretation
Age: Young	0.209	0.428	Not Significant
R-Square	.043		
Adjusted	-0.025		

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F-value	0.636
sig.-value	0.438

The table above shows the test for a significant relationship between the respondents' attitude towards English and the academic performance among young (14 years old) respondents. Using single regression analysis, it can be deemed that result of the analysis showed an R-square value of 0.043 which means that only 4.3% of the variance in their academic performance can be explained by their attitude in English.

Analysis of variance showed an F-value of 0.636 with a significance value of 0.438 which is greater than the 0.05 significance level which means that there is no significant relationship between the respondents' attitude in English and their English Performance among students with age under the young bracket.

Beta coefficient revealed that attitude towards English ($\beta = 0.209$, p <0.05) with a significance value of 0.428 which is greater than the 0.05 significance level did not significantly predict the English performance among the students. This suggests that the attitudes of respondents toward English do not affect the academic performance of young (14 years old) respondents. Further, it can be implied that young students do not view attitude in English as a dominating factor towards better performance inside the class.

Table 6. Single Regression Analysis on the Relationship of the Respondents' Attitudes towards English to their Academic Performance using their Age Profile (Adult) as Moderator

Variable	Beta	Sig.	Interpretation
Age: Adult	0.225	0.289	Not Significant
R-Square		0.051	
Adjusted		0.008	
F-value		1.178	
sig.-value		0.289	

The table above shows the test for a significant relationship between the respondents' attitude towards English and the academic performance among adult (15 years old) respondents for adult respondents. Results of table 6 showed an R-square value of 0.051 which means that only 5.1% of the variance in the academic performance of adult students can be explained by their attitude towards English.

Analysis of variance showed an F-value of 0.636 with a significance value of 1.178 which is greater than the 0.05 significance level which means that there is no significant relationship between the respondents' attitude in English and their English Performance among students with age under 15 years old.

Beta coefficient revealed that attitude towards English ($\beta = 0.225$, p <0.05) with a significance value of 0.289 which is greater than the 0.05 significance level did not significantly predict their academic performance. This suggests that the attitudes toward English do not affect the academic performance of adult (15 years old) respondents. Further, it can be implied that for students with age 15 years old view their attitude towards the subject is not a predictor of their academic achievement inside English class.

Having significance values that are higher than the 0.05 significance level for both young and adult respondents it can be inferred that their age does not act as moderate the existence of the relationship between respondents' attitude toward English and their academic performance.

8.7. Respondents' Sex as Moderator on the Relationship of the Respondents' Attitudes towards English to their Academic Performance

Table 7. Single Regression Analysis on the Relationship of the Respondents' Attitudes towards English to their Academic Performance using their Sex Profile (Male) as Moderator

Variable	Beta	Sig.	Interpretation
Sex: Male	0.207	0.311	Not Significant
R-Square	0.043		
Adjusted	0.003		
F-value	1.070		
sig.-value	0.311		

Table 7 presents a single regression analysis on the relationship between the male respondents' attitudes toward English and their academic performance. The result of the analysis showed an R-square value of 0.043 which suggests that only 4.3% of the variance on the academic performance of the male respondents can be explained by their attitudes in English.

Analysis of variance showed an F-value of 1.070 with significance value of 0.311 which is greater than the 0.05 significance level which suggests that there is no significant relationship between the male respondents' attitudes toward English and their academic performance.

Beta coefficient showed that males' attitude towards English ($\beta = 0.207$, p <0.05) with a significance value of 0.311 which is greater than the 0.05 significance level did not predict their academic performance. This means that the males have no positive perception of their attitudes in English as a determining factor for their academic achievement in the subject.

Table 8. Single Regression Analysis on the Relationship of the Respondents' Attitudes towards English to their Academic Performance using their Sex Profile (Female) as Moderator

Variable	Beta	Sig.	Interpretation
Sex: Female	0.197	0.494	Not Significant
R-Square	0.039		
Adjusted	-0.041		
F-value	0.486		
sig.-value	0.499		

Table 8 presents a single regression analysis on the relationship between the female respondents' attitudes toward English and their academic performance. Results of the analysis showed an R-square value of 0.039 which suggests that only 3.9% of the variance on the academic performance of the female respondents can be explained by their attitudes in English.

Analysis of variance showed an F-value of 0.486 with a significance value of 0.499 which is greater than the 0.05 significance level which suggests that there is no significant relationship between the female respondents' attitudes toward English and their academic performance.

Beta coefficient showed that females' attitude towards English ($\beta = 0.197$, p <0.05) with a significance value of 0.494 which is greater than the 0.05 significance level did not significantly predict their academic performance. This means that the females do not view their attitudes toward English as a motivation for better performance inside their English class. Hence, based on the significance values for both males and females which are higher than the 0.05 significance level, it can be inferred that the sex of the respondents is not a moderator on the existence of a relationship between their attitudes toward English and their academic performance.

Conclusions

Based on the data analyzed above, it was concluded that there is no significant relationship that exists between the students' attitude towards English and their academic performance. The academic

performance among the respondents was not affected by all means with their attitudes toward the English language. Further, age and sex did not moderate nor affect the relationship of students' attitudes towards the English language with their academic performance in English subject.

Acknowledgments

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