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A Study on Attitude of Students and Teachers towards Learning and Teaching English as a School Subject

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Abstract : *The different boards have introduced several changes to enhance the communication and literary skills of the students to cater to the needs of the present era of globalization, which requires a lot of efforts on the part of both students and teachers. This research paper studies the attitude of students and teachers towards learning and*

teaching English as a school subject. The study is conducted on the selected teachers and students studying in class VIII in the schools affiliated to ICSE, CBSE and BSEB examination boards. A sample of 5 teachers and 40 students of class VIII were taken from each board. The findings of the present study reveal that the attitude of the students and the teachers towards learning and teaching English is positive. The paper concludes with some suggestions to improve the teaching-learning process of English language.

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Key words: *Attitude, learning, teaching, English.*

Introduction :

“Of all the legacies of Raj, none is more important than the English language and the modern school system (Bose 2005).” This statement, from none other than the prime minister of India, Dr. Manmohan Singh, very aptly captures the importance of English learning in India and hence outlines the need of positive attitude towards its teaching and learning. The changing times have witnessed the growing importance of English language in every walk of life. Conscious and unconscious use of words in our everyday

conversation from the English language bears evidence to the growing popularity of English. The global connection can be provided only by a world language –English (Tyagi 2006). Hence the following statement is very apt in this context- “The English language is all an advanced and flexible one and its teaching should not be discarded altogether. Indians cannot afford to ignore this language” -Dr. Rajendra Prasad (Bose 2005). Undoubtedly, learning of English is very important even in Indian perspective to acquire higher qualification and have pace with the fast progressing world.

English language is of paramount importance in the academic and professional lives of the students (Basturkman, 1998; Pendergrass et al., 2001; Pritchard & Nasr, 2004, Joseba, 2005; Sidek et al., 2006; Venkatraman & Prema, 2007). For example, Pendergrass et al. (2001) point out that English is an essential tool in education and therefore, “integrating English into science and math courses is an effective way to improve the performance of students in oral and written communication”. Gardner (1979) has done extensive research on attitude and motivation and their co-relation with linguistic performance of learners. He suggested that a learner needs to be psychologically prepared to acquire a second or a foreign language as it is a part of different ethno-linguistic community. A learner is required to impose elements of another culture into one’s own life space. Therefore, he needs to be psychologically prepared (Agnihotri & Khanna, 1994).

English occupies a place of prestige in our country. It opens myriad opportunities both on academic and professional fronts (Dickinsen, 1987). Being the language of the world, it connects one to the global life. But English learning has never been an easy task (Lado, 1964). It can be and often does a life long journey of discovery and

boundless rewards for those who pursue it (Sharma, 1999). An additional challenge is the clash between students’ learning preferences and teachers’ perceptions of these students’ learning preferences (Jahin, 2006).

Like the socio economic diversity in India, school education also offers a multifaceted mode (Nunan, 1985). The different boards have introduced several changes to enhance the communication and literary skills of the students to cater to the needs of the present era of globalization, which requires a lot of efforts on the part of both students and teachers. Since the attitude directs the path and resultant success, it is the factor which affects the whole education system (Gokak, 1964). It was to find out this attitude of the students and teachers of different boards that the research was undertaken. The research aimed to find out the attitude of the students and teachers towards learning and teaching of English. Therefore the research aimed at the following objectives:

Objectives of the Study :

1. To find out the attitude towards English language of the students who are studying in different boards of examination in Patna.
2. To find out the attitude of the teachers towards English language teaching in different boards of examination in Patna.
3. To compare the weightage given to the internal and external evaluation of English language in different boards of examination in Patna.
4. To compare the academic achievements in English of the students studying in different boards of examination in Patna.

Hypotheses :

The first **two** objectives will be fulfilled through the following two hypotheses. The other two objectives of the study will have to be fulfilled by answering the questions corresponding to each objective.

H1 There is no difference in the attitude towards English language of the students studying in different boards of examination in Patna.

H2 There is no difference in the attitude of the teachers towards English language, teaching in different boards of examination in Patna.

METHOD

Population of the Study

The aim of this study was to assess the attitude of teachers and students towards teaching and learning English as a school subject in different boards of examination in Patna. Hence, the population for this study was students of standard VIII and English teachers of the three boards viz. ICSE, CBSE and BSEB of Patna.

Sample of the Study

40 students and 5 teachers from each of the three boards were chosen by Simple Random Sampling Method as the sample of the study. The students were of standard VIII. These students and teachers were of Carmel High School, St. Paul's Academy, Children's Heaven High School, NASC Academy, Balak Madhya Vidyalaya & K. B. Sahay Middle School.

Break-up of the Sample

S. No.	Name of the Schools	Boards	Sample size (Students)	Sample size (Teachers)
1.	Carmel High School	ICSE	20	2
2.	St. Paul's Academy	ICSE	20	3
3.	Children's Heaven High School	CBSE	20	2
4.	NASC Academy	CBSE	20	3
5.	Balak Madhya Vidyalaya	BSEB	20	2
6.	K. B. Sahay Middle School	BSEB	20	3
Total			120	15

Tools for Data Collection :

For the collection of relevant data, two attitude scales were constructed. The type of questions used in these scales was closed ended. The closed-ended questions are the fixed-choice questions. They require the respondent to choose a response from those provided by the researcher.

The first questionnaire was administered upon the students. It consisted of three sections, first section is for extracting personal information about the students, second section includes the table to fill their academic achievements and the third section includes 20 items related to their attitude towards learning English as a school subject.

The second questionnaire was administered upon the teachers. It consisted of two sections. First section was for extracting personal information about the teachers. Second section consisted of 20 items related to the attitude and competency of teachers towards teaching English as a school subject.

Reliability of the questionnaires was found by split-half method. The reliability coefficients of the two half tests were found to be 0.49 and 0.47 respectively and the reliability coefficients of the whole tests were found to be 0.62 and 0.67 using Spearman-Brown Prophecy formula. The reliability coefficients of 0.62 and 0.67 were significant at 0.01 levels which show that the reliability of the questionnaires was high and the tools were sufficiently reliable.

Content validity of the tests was established by the constructors with the help of various experts' opinions and suggestions. The items were thoroughly evaluated and criticized by the experts.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Attitude of the Students towards Learning English Language

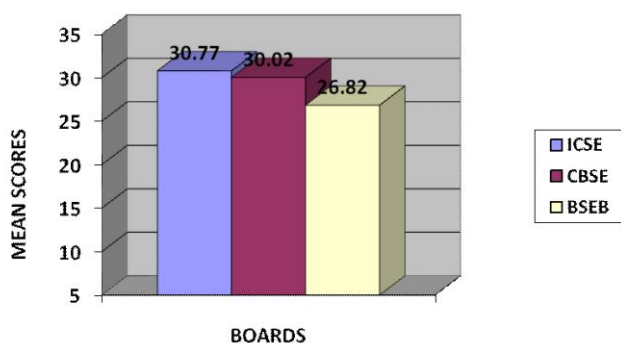
To have a positive attitude towards the language is a good start to learning the language. It

makes the learning process much easier. A student's motivation for learning English and attitude toward learning the language are the leading predictors of success in learning English (Gardner, 1979).

Table 1: Attitude of students towards English language

Sl. No.	Boards	Mean Scores
1.	ICSE	30.77
2.	CBSE	30.02
3.	BSEB	26.82

Figure 1: Attitude of students towards English language



The above table and graph show that there is no significant difference in the attitude towards English language of the students studying in different boards of examination in Patna. The mean scores of the three boards that is ICSE, CBSE, BSEB are 30.77, 30.02 and 26.82 respectively. There is only marginal difference in the scores of ICSE and CBSE boards, while the difference is relatively more in score of BSEB. The reason for this difference may be, the schools which are under Bihar School Examination Board (BSEB), English is taught as a subject and not as a language, which does not help in developing proper attitude towards the language. Moreover, there, schools enroll a large number of children from deprived section of society, who hardly have studied English in

previous classes. Studies show that command over a foreign language is not an easy task, especially for learners who begin studying a foreign language after puberty (Lenneberg, 1967; Seliger, 1978). Teachers' language proficiency, exposure to language and materials are also major concerns for quality English language learning which are lacking in such schools in Bihar (NCF, 2005).

On the basis of the mean scores it can be said that the students of the different boards are positive towards learning English as a school subject. Thus, with reference to the first objective, attitude towards English language of the students studying in different boards did not differ. Therefore null hypothesis was accepted showing that different boards of examination do not affect attitude towards English language.

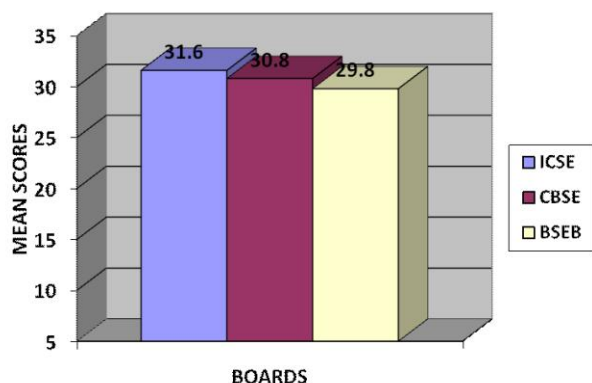
Attitude of the Teachers towards Teaching English Language

No matter what the students' reasons are, the teacher is ever ready to impart knowledge because that is his only reason for being at school, a place to give and impart formal education. This is very true as the teachers of every board have positive attitude towards their profession and they take measures to make the learning more effective.

Table 2 : Attitude of the Teachers towards Teaching English Language

Sl. No.	Boards	Mean Scores
1.	ICSE	31.60
2.	CBSE	30.80
3.	BSEB	29.80

Figure 2: Attitude of the Teachers towards Teaching English Language



The above table and graph show that the mean scores of the teachers of the three boards i.e. ICSE, CBSE and BSEB are 31.60, 30.80 and 29.80 respectively. It is found that the mean score of the teachers of all the three boards is around 30 and there is negligible difference in their scores. Hence the teachers of all the three boards are inclined towards English teaching. Thus, with reference to the second objective, attitude of the teachers of different boards towards teaching English language did not differ. Therefore null hypothesis was accepted showing that different boards of examination do not affect attitude of the teachers towards teaching English language.

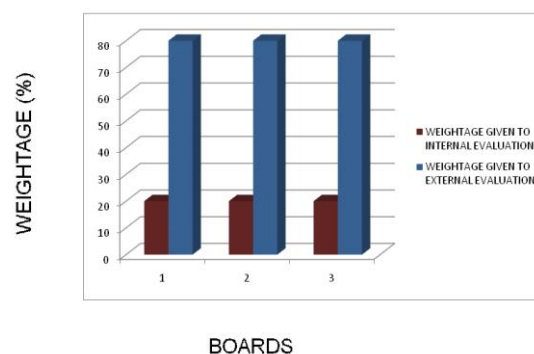
Weightage Given to Internal and External Evaluation

Once you have the right attitude, then everything else will fall into its place. Learning will be easy, lessons will be enjoyed, and in the end you have a lot to benefit from the language.

Table 3: Weightage Given to Internal and External Evaluation

S. No.	Boards	External Marks	Internal Marks
1.	ICSE	80%	20%
2.	CBSE	80%	20%
3.	BSEB	80%	20%

Figure 3: Weightage Given to Internal and External Evaluation



The above table and graph show that the external and internal assessment of examination of all the three boards that is ICSE, CBSE and BSEB are 80% and 20% respectively. Thus the weightage given to internal and external evaluation of English language in different boards of examination is equal.

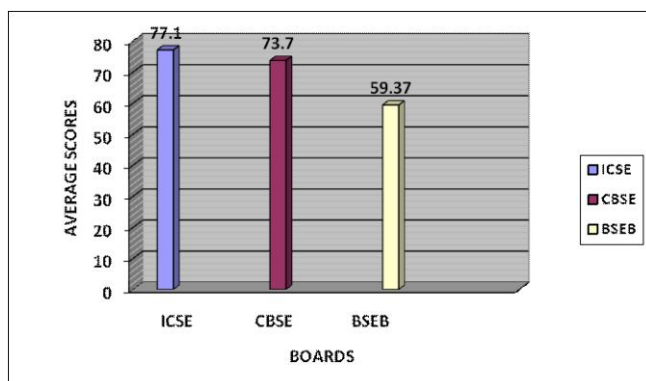
Academic Achievements of ICSE, CBSE and BSEB Students

The study of attitudes and motivations for learning English points to a need for instruction that helps students function effectively in occupational settings, as well as society as a whole (Agnihotri & Khanna, 1994). The present study of academic achievements of the students shows that the students are aware of the need and importance of English in the present scenario.

Table 4: Academic Achievements of ICSE, CBSE and BSEB Students

Sl. No.	Boards	Mean Scores
1.	ICSE	77.10%
2.	CBSE	73.70%
3.	BSEB	59.37%

Figure 4: Academic Achievements of ICSE, CBSE and BSEB Students



It can be observed from the above table and graph that the average scores of the three boards i.e. ICSE, CBSE and BSEB are 77.10%, 73.70% and 59.37% respectively. Again there is slight difference in scores of ICSE and CBSE boards. So the students of these two boards have good academic achievements in English Subject. While there is a huge difference in the score of BSEB. Thus it can be said that the performance of students of BSEB is comparatively low than the students of ICSE and CBSE boards. The biggest factor behind this variation probably is that in spite of studying English as a subject, they do not get exposure to situations where they can use English or they can observe how English is used by others. Their knowledge is restricted to writing an examination of English. On the contrary, students from CBSE and ICSE board schools get English speaking environment in their schools. They use English in day to day like. Teachers use communicative approach and direct method to teach.

We cannot neglect the fact that these different boards represent different economic sections of the society. State Board schools provide education on very nominal rates. Therefore, the economically weaker sections of the society never go for a second choice, while who can spend more prefer to

teach their wards in ICSE and CBSE schools. Children from economically weaker sections obviously do not get exposure to English at home also as they are deprived of the facilities like television or convent educated English speaking parents, relatives or friends in comparison to the children studying in ICSE and CBSE board schools. Thus, it is observed that many students of state board schools are good in other subjects, but due to lack of language skills they fail to produce good result.

Conclusions :

1. From the study, it can be concluded that more or less the students of all the three boards that is ICSE, CBSE and BSEB are inclined towards learning English and they enjoy their English classes. There is slight difference between the attitude of students of all the three boards towards learning English.
2. On the basis of the study, it can be concluded that most of the participant teachers were interested in teaching English. They promote the students to think creatively in English class. They give interesting assignments to motivate the students. They themselves take keen interest in reading books and make students aware regarding the new trends. The attitude score of teachers are more positive than those of students.
3. The study also leads us to the conclusion that all the schools are teaching English as a separate subject and they have a separate teacher for teaching this particular subject, in all the three boards. The teachers design the questions to develop thinking skills like analysing, reasoning, sequencing etc. among students so we can say that teachers of all the boards possess a favourable attitude towards teaching English.

4. Findings show that the weightage given to the internal and external evaluation of English language in different boards of examination are equal.
5. The study reveals that students of all the three boards are performing better in the field of English. The performance of BSEB students are comparatively low than ICSE and CBSE students.

Implications :

1. The findings of the present study reveal that attitude and motivation are the leading predictors for the learning of English language. Therefore, educators should take into consideration to reinforce the students during the process of teaching-learning in order to develop positive attitude.
2. For improving proficiency in English among the BSEB students concerted efforts of all stake holders such as curriculum planners, textbook writers and English language teachers are required.

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