

Attitudes of Maranao Learners towards English Language Learning

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Abstract:- This study determined the attitudes of Maranao learners towards English Language Learning through their use of English in worshipping, communicating with fellow Muslims, schools, commercial establishments, and on social media. Furthermore, it also identified the factors that influenced their attitudes towards learning the English language.

Using the qualitative approach, the data were acquired through interviews with 10 students who are studying in Matnog National High School, Matnog, Sorsogon and selected through purposive sampling. Using thematic analysis, it was revealed that the learners have varying attitudes towards English Language Learning, which included flexibility, preferred language, acceptance, and resentment; and the factors that affected their attitudes towards learning English includes acceptance of mediocrity and persistence to be better.

I. INTRODUCTION

English language is the most widely-used medium written and spoken by billions of people around the world. This language has also developed into an indispensable tool in contemporary societies, notably in professional domains. As a matter-of-fact, English – particularly in its standard form – is taught in around 180 countries worldwide as a result of its growing absolute importance (Kitao, 1996). In the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), it has been assigned priority in quality education and provision of lessons/learnings to individuals which is deemed customary for the nations to uphold (UNESCO, 2017).

A study of English Language Learning and Belief proved that language learning strategy has also an important contribution to the language learning (Su & Min-Hsun, 2005). Another research revealed that learners' attitude toward language learning is crucial since it can greatly impact learning results and language learning proficiency. It indicated that learners with a positive attitude toward language learning employ Language Learning Strategy (LLS) more frequently and effectively (Platsidou and Kantaridou (2014). Their study is confirmatory factor analysis to show that attitudes toward language learning predict the use of both direct and indirect learning strategies. Meanwhile, Jabbari and Golkar (2014) reported a more frequent use of cognitive, metacognitive, compensation, and social strategies among students with a positive attitude toward language learning.

The same importance for this language exists in the Philippines. With approximately 170 dialects present on its islands, the country is rich in linguistic diversity (Fleming, 2020). Although English is from foreign country, Philippines' considerable patronage on the "lingua franca" paved way on declaring English as one of the two official languages of the country (Cabigon, 2015); not disregarding Filipino remaining the native language in the Philippines (Young, 2010). Due to such acculturation, educational system in the Philippines opted to make English language learning mandatory. Hence, the reiteration of the enhancement of the language learning strategies (LLS) through the teaching strategies of educators in the country as stipulated in Deped Order No. 35 series of 2016 (Luistro, 2016) and reinforced by Deped Order No. 72 series of 2017 (Briones, 2017).

However, with the advent of the K-12 system, a modest revision was made to the country's language instruction. From kindergarten to grade 3, pupils are taught in their region's dominant language. From there, English will be taught up to Senior High School and including the tertiary level. As a result, from 2019 to 2020, the country will have to maintain a high level of English proficiency (Baclig, 2020).

Despite this, there is a developing concern in Sorsogon regarding Muslim high school learners particularly Maranao learners who are not inclined towards learning the language. During the researcher's visit in some madrasah classes in communal masjids, students who are enrolled in formal schools have no interests in learning the language. When asked how they perform in school, most of them answered they do not care and that most of the time, their performance level in learning the English language is very poor. They would rather learn Arabic than get acquainted with English. Thus, this study will strive to ascertain the Maranao students' English proficiency, the population rate of high school Arabic learners, their motivations for studying the language, their attitudes towards English, and the factors that may influence their attitude toward the field.

This is what prompts the researcher to study the factors that influence the attitudes of Maranao learners towards English language learning and eventually use the findings to propose measures on how to aid these learners in learning the language effectively and appropriately.

II. METHODOLOGY

The study determined the attitudes of Maranao learners towards English Language Learning through their use of English in worshipping, in communicating with fellow Muslims, in schools, in commercial establishments, and in social media. Furthermore, this study also identified the factors that affected their attitudes towards learning the language. The data were acquired through interviews with the ten (10) informants who are studying in Matnog National High School, Matnog, Sorsogon and selected through purposive sampling.

The qualitative approach was employed to determine the Maranao learners' attitudes towards English and the factors that affected their language learning. Data collected was analyzed through thematic analysis.

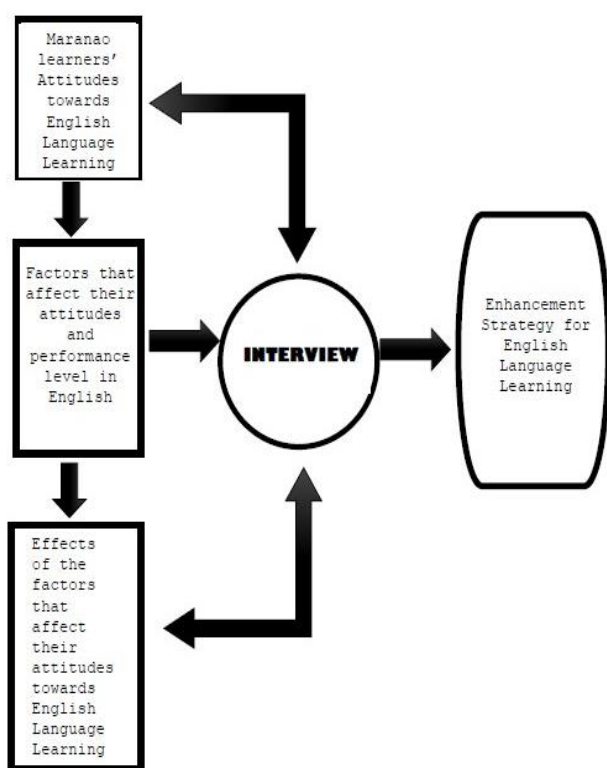


Figure 1: Conceptual Paradigm

III. ATTITUDES OF MARANAO LEARNERS TOWARDS ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING

A. Attitudes of Maranao learners towards the use of English in Worshipping

The study revealed that the informants have their own perceptions towards the English language and learning it. However, their attitudes differ from one another. This is prominent in their means of communication in the selected locale of the study and this is evident in the narratives shared by the participants which generated four (4) themes: Flexibility, Preferred Language, Acceptance, and Resentment.

The theme Flexibility emerged because the informants' responses are adaptable to their situations. They use English only when needed or whenever the person they are talking to is using the language but if there is no need for the language, they prefer using the vernacular. On the other hand, Resentment means showing hostility towards the language. They would rather not talk or not enter in a venue with someone speaking in English. For Preferred Language, the response is obviously favoring a different language instead of English while acceptance shows the recognition of the importance of the English language to their studies and growth as learners.

In summary, majority of them did not accept the English language as an effective way of communication with one another especially in worshipping. In fact, one respondent claimed that using vernacular words in Bicol, Tagalog or Maranao is enough just to express their thoughts and prayers as part of worshipping. This only means that English Language Learning is not their priority as the language to use in worshipping. In fact, some are even afraid to use the language because of lack of confidence in using the English language and some have no interest in learning this language.

These corroborate the study of Aljadani (2020) that states that speaking and listening are the two most critical language abilities, with reading and writing coming in last. In addition, it was also discovered that English is seen as a tool for effectively performing their jobs, including preaching to and training pilgrims. Nonetheless, there were other issues that limit their performance in using the language, such as limited vocabulary, dialects, and religious statements that were acceptable for the situation.

B. Attitudes of Maranao learners towards the use of English in Communicating with fellow Muslims

It was also revealed that the attitudes of Maranao learners towards the use of English in communicating with fellow Muslims are evident in their statements which were categorized into four (4) themes. These are: Flexibility, Equality, Difficulty, and Resistance.

Flexibility means learning to adapt to the situations. Informants showed that they can opt to use or modify their use of the language depending on the circumstances. Equality is for the responses that show appreciation of being treated equal or being given fair treatment. They pointed out the equivalence of one another and so according to them regardless of religion, English – speaking people should be given fair treatment. Difficulty is when the response stated that there is indeed a struggle in their learning of the English language. That due to their lack of good foundation of the language they find it hard to learn and use English in communication. Finally, Resistance is when they choose not to study English because they can live without it. In general, the responses emphasized their low interest in learning English because they thought there is no need for it.

These findings are in corroboration with the study of Islam et al (2022) which discovered that Muslims are facing major problems communicating in English. Moreover, Colaste (2018) revealed that learners admit having difficulty in using the English language. Hence, if they needed something to be communicated, they send private message or group message instead. Such challenge is experienced in the facets of communication which are in listening, reading, writing, and speaking.

C. Attitudes of Maranao learners towards the use of English in Schools

Learning English is essential for Filipinos because it is used religiously in the practice of law, business, and even became the most popular, if not the only medium of instruction in schools. These are also evident in the informants' experiences in relation to using the English language as a means of communicating in school. The narratives generated five themes: Felt Discriminated, Felt Belong, Gap Bridged, Confidence in the Teacher, and Well-adjusted.

The theme Felt Discriminated means that the responses displayed a clear manifestation of being singled out. They are reminded that they are not chosen for some activities because organizers or their teachers thought they know less or that they are not good enough to be include. In contrast, theme Felt Belong gives a sense of being considered or a significant part of a group. This make improves their self - esteem and motivates them to excel in activities they engage in. On the other hand, theme Gap Bridged exhibits acknowledgment of making policies in English. This clarifies rules and regulations written in English that applies to all learners. Well-adjusted is a manifestation of being fully adaptive in the learning and use of the language in relation to their daily activities at home and in school. For the theme Confidence in the teacher is for the responses that show belief in the ability of their teachers as instrument in making them more interested in learning the English language.

This is in corroboration with the study of Colaste (2018) which described the perception of students on learning English at school. It was revealed that negative take on the language is attributed to their limited language skills which consequently prevented them from effectively communicating their feelings through the use of English as a medium. Furthermore, Borja (2016) found that students' attitudes toward learning English are both neutral and favorable toward the manner in which the language is taught.

D. Attitudes of Maranao learners towards the use of English in Commercial Establishments

The attitude towards being English literate is marked by the community's degree of utility of the English language. In the Muslim community where the informants of this study reside, reading materials and postings reinforces their culture and Islamic background. These are evident in the statements of the informants which generated polarized themes. There are the themes Language Barriers and Limitations and Need Basis, Reasons or Motivation.

The theme Language Barriers means that there are obstacles and boundaries in learning the English language which reveals the difficulties encountered by these learners towards smooth flow of learning the language. These difficulties include non-exposure to language, lack of vocabulary, hostility towards the language and resistance in using the language. On the other hand, the theme Need Basis, Reasons and Motivations clarifies the necessity of having enough reasons and motivation to go on learning the language. Learners show insufficiency of knowledge of the importance of the English language that adds up to unwillingness to learn.

The responses of the informants mean that they have different attitudes towards the use of English language in commercial establishments. Although some of them are positive to accept the use of English language as a form of communication in commercial establishments, there are still some of them who are reluctant to use the language since they are not fluent in English, which lead to uncomfortable use of English as their language. It is only an indication that even though they wanted to accept using English language in commercial establishments, they rather opt to use their own dialects since they quite comfortable to use it over English language.

This corroborates the study of Wijayanto (2020) in which the Muslim student's attitude towards learning English is a trickledown effect from the effectiveness in school that reinforces their social adaption when in different commercial establishments like offices, grocery shops, etc.

E. Attitudes of Maranao learners towards the use of English on Social Media

Reading and writing in English are exercised when using social media. Anecdotal data suggests that these views on English do have an impact on Muslims' willingness to study the language, particularly in settings where Islamic values are more strongly ingrained. Relatedly, the participants have narratives about their consumption and utilization of English in social media. Their sharing generated four (4) themes: Valuation of Diverse Users, Fitting In, Parental Prerogative, and Academic Imperative.

The theme Valuation of Diverse Users is for the responses that accept that there are individual differences in the personalities and perceptions of the social media users. Every post particularly in Facebook display diversity of users and their beliefs and practices. Fitting In theme is for the noticeable responses of the informants about them or the other Maranao learners who are trying to be a part of the social platforms. This confirms their desire to have sense of belongingness. Parental Prerogative is for the responses that consider parental permission before doing or posting anything on social media. And the last theme is Academic Imperative which shows that these learners will only engage in deepening their knowledge of the English language only if it has anything to do with their academic standing.

Most of the informants claimed that the use of English language on social media is quite acceptable but not true to all. It is because they knew that there are lots of users online and not only English language is the means of communication. If they talk or communicate with Maranao people, then their vernacular terms will also be used. If their purpose is to communicate Islam as this is an obligation, they would use English if they want to be understood internationally but if they are only reminding fellow Muslims particularly Maranao, they would prefer using the vernacular. This only means that the use of English language on social media is not always appreciated because it depends on the users if they would use English or the medium they prefer.

This is in corroboration with the study of Farid and Lamb (2020). According to their gathered anecdotal evidence, some Indonesian Islamic boarding schools (*pesantren*) may have pupils who have negative attitudes toward English, which causes both individual and institutional opposition to learning the language. This demonstrated how the participants' motivation is tied to their spiritual goal, which is to use English primarily for *da'wah* (Islamic proclamation) and for communicating with other Muslims around the world. They may use this *da'wah* motivation to overcome the dissonance they experience when learning the non-believer language, but it does not seem to create much learning effort.

F. Factors that Affected the Attitudes of Maranao Learners

Learning a foreign language has multiple factors affecting the learner's attitude. Some of these factors are attributed to social, cultural, educational, and learning situations. From the narratives of the informants, there are three (3) themes derived which are: Socio-Cultural Considerations, Motivation, and Educational Purposes.

The theme Socio-cultural considerations is for the responses that exhibit the attention given to the differences in cultures and beliefs including future consideration. Next theme is the Motivation which is for the responses that show their reason for learning or for not learning the language. And the last theme is Educational Purposes which shows their knowledge of the importance of learning the language in their present school endeavor and eventually its benefits after graduating from school.

It shows the different factors affecting attitudes in learning English language. Indeed, there are several factors affecting the attitudes in learning English language. They have enumerated their experiences and speculations if they will learn English language which means that these factors which they have mentioned triggered them to learn or not to learn English language.

These are in corroboration with the study of Getie (2020) which revealed that positive social influences on students' views include peer groups, parents of learners, and native English speakers. On the other hand, elements of the educational context including English language instructors and the physical learning environment (such as classrooms, seating arrangements, etc.) have a negative effect on students'

attitudes. Therefore, by decreasing the psychological variables (i.e. emotional filters) for the target language learners, it is feasible to aid the language acquisition process.

G. Factors affecting the Attitudes of Maranao Learners in Learning English.

Performance in the English language learning is usually motivated by attitude. Such attitude towards learning the English language is also influenced by the learner's environment. In this particular study, the attitude towards learning the English language has two (2) emerging themes which are: (a) Acceptance of Mediocrity and (b) Persistence to be better. These two extremes are manifested in the narratives of the informants.

The theme for Acceptance of Mediocrity means that the responses are showing that the learners are not into excelling in the field of English language learning and they are contented with whatever grades they receive or knowledge of the English language. For the theme Persistence to be Better, are for the responses that manifest the learners' attitude of looking for ways to be better.

These talk about the effects of the different factors on attitudes toward English language learning. Although they have their different ways on how to accept the use of learning English language, they still have their common reason why they would like to learn English language and that is to become a better person in the future. It is only an implication that learning English language would somehow help them in their endeavors.

These results are corroborated by many scholarly works in which the student's beliefs or attitude towards the value of the English language have purported them to reason and feel that English is important; hence, they need to build their competence on it Zulfikar et al. (2019). Moreover, culture and its permissiveness to valuing English is also a significant predictor of shaping the motivation of the learners towards learning English (PayandehDariNejad & Habibzadeh, 2021).

IV. CONCLUSION

The study revealed that there was a resounding struggle, difficulty, resistance, and barriers in the usage of English as one of the languages of communication. It is shown in the informants' attitudes towards using the language when they worship, in communicating with fellow Muslims, in schools, in commercial establishments and on social media. This is attributed to many considerations such as culture, community, peers, and parents. Fortunately, there are mechanisms to bridge the gap and mitigate the declining motivation of these learners. Some of which are support in equipment, competent teachers, and implementation of policies.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the conclusion, the following recommendations are made: Learners must be provided with motivation (intrinsic and extrinsic) to have the drive to learn English. A reading material could be utilized to constantly remind the learners of the importance of English. On the other hand, Teachers' efforts can be partnered with support of technology-enhanced English language instruction. Trainings can also be provided to upskill their knowledge and skill in the designing and delivery of English lessons. Moreover, Administrators' Strategies can be designed in terms of recruiting and retaining high-performing English teachers. This includes curriculum design in English that considers learners' culture and how it can be a permissive factor (rather than barrier) to learning the English language. Lastly, for researchers, areas that are also interesting to explore are other perspectives like of the teachers, parents, and school administrators for a comprehensive narrative and holistic strategy to be devised tailor-fitted to the peculiar way of life in those selected locale of study.

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