

# ATTITUDE OF STUDENTS IN READING COMPREHENSION

**Naely Muchtar**

*Politeknik Negeri Ujung Pandang*

## **Abstract**

Reading is certainly one area that receives considerable attention in academic life. Teacher/lecturer have come to realize that students' attitude toward reading is every bit as important as improving students reading comprehension. The creation and maintenance of positive attitude toward reading comprehension is expected to be steppingstone of the students' success of being good reader. This paper is discussed about the importance of attitudes in relation with reading comprehension. It is expected will give contribution for educator in teaching reading comprehension in all level of education.

*Keywords: Attitude, Reading comprehension.*

## **READING COMPREHENSION**

Reading comprehension is fundamental to academic learning in all content areas. It is integrally related to foundational skills such as listening comprehension, oral language, and phonological awareness. Reading comprehension also requires more advanced skills in word recognition and fluency, and the development of vocabulary. Reading comprehension consists of several levels of understanding, beginning with an understanding of the literal meaning of text. Skilled readers go beyond this literal meaning, however to develop an understanding of the context in which the passage was written, its genre, its purpose, and its relationship to other knowledge about the world and the specific situation addressed in the text.

Research indicates that good readers actively construct meaning by interacting the text (Duke & Pearson, 2001). They read with a purpose, and they use a variety of strategies before, during, and after reading. Beside that characteristics of good readers namely have background knowledge about the text material or related concept, have good reading ability, interest, and positive attitude toward reading.

Reading comprehension has to do with the interpretation of texts. As Ramirez (1995:201) said that "The comprehension of written texts is a complex process involving many linguistic sub skills and systems of knowledge, including the social uses of written language and structures for organizing information." The reading process can be conceived of as an interaction between the writer (author

of the text) and the reader. The reader constructs the meaning of the text through use of comprehension strategies, awareness of textual features (rhetorical structure, vocabulary, grammar) and knowledge of extra textual elements (topic familiarity, cultural situations, and text types). A definition of comprehension might stress the importance of vocabulary knowledge.

Reading comprehension is essential to academic learning areas, to professional success and to lifelong learning. Shuyun and Munby (1996) noted that academic reading is a very deliberate, demanding and complex process in which the students are actively involved in a repertoire of reading strategies. In a review of the development in second language reading research, the crucial importance of reading skills in academic contexts has led to considerable research on reading in a second language. Levine et al. (2000:1) stated that “The ability to read academic texts is considered one of the most important skills that university students of English as a second language (ESL) and English as a foreign language (EFL) need to acquire.”

### **THE ATTITUDE**

Attitude is a learned tendency to respond to people, concepts, and events in an evaluative way. Attitudes are composed of beliefs, feelings, and action tendencies. An attitude is often defined as a tendency to react favorably or unfavorably toward a designated class of stimuli, such as a national or ethnic group, a custom, or an institution. Attitude is a hypothetical construct that represents an individual's like or dislike for an item. Attitudes are positive, negative, or neutral views of an “attitude object): i.e. a person behavior or event. People can also be “ambivalent” towards a target, meaning that they simultaneously possess a positive and a negative bias towards the attitude in question. Attitudes are composed from various forms of judgments. Attitudes develop on the ABC model (affect, behavioral change, and cognition). The affective response is a physiological response that expresses an individual's preference for an entity. The behavioral intention is a verbal indication of the intention of an individual. The cognitive response is a cognitive evaluation of the entity to form an attitude. Most attitudes in individuals are a result of observational learning from their environment.

It can be concluded that attitude refers much to behavior or personality. Attitude is predisposition or a tendency to respond positively or negatively towards a certain idea, object, person, or situation. Attitude influences an individual's choice of action, and responses to challenges, incentives, and rewards (together called stimuli). The term a tendency or a learned predisposition to respond either positively or negatively clearly indicates manner of someone to behave, that is, he or she behaves favorably or unfavorably. The way or the manner someone behaves is then believed as the reflection of one's personality. It is also true to say that attitude refers to like and dislike. One who likes an object is

believed to respond positively to that object. Further, attitude is the reflection of mind.

### **The Components of Attitude**

There are three components of attitudes. They are described as follows:

1. Cognitive component concerns thought and beliefs or propositions and opinions about the way things are ought to be. A favorable attitude to English might entail a stated belief in the importance of continuity of the indigenous language, its value in the transmission of English culture and use in immersion bilingual education. Cognitive competence of an attitude is that based on beliefs, knowledge, information, and perception. The beliefs or the knowledge bear from what someone have known.
2. Affective component concerns the individual's evaluation of the attitude object. The evaluation usually involves emotional feelings towards the attitude object (e.g. English). The feeling may concern love or hate and like or dislike of the language. Affect or emotion associated with these beliefs, measurable in terms of psychological reactions or intensity and style of response. Affective component consists of positive or negative affects (feeling). The feeling is affected by beliefs about an object. Whether the object is true or false/right or wrong. In other words affective component concerns with individual emotion.
3. Co-native component, action-intention component or behavioral component concerns a readiness for action or the individual's action tendency toward the object. It is a behavioral intention or plan of action under defined contexts and circumstances. A person with a favorable attitude to English might state that they would learn and practice their English as a daily conversation. This component of attitude shows how the person will act to the object, or the tendency of the person to act in the object. This component concerns itself with the individual's predisposition to respond, to seek out, and to approach the attitude object.

Several examples of attitudes components toward reading as follows:

- a. How much the students' look forward to read;

- b. The extent to which the students is prepared to share his reading experiences;
- c. The students' preferences for types of reading material;
- d. The pleasure which the students derive from reading;
- e. How relevant the students' feel a reading task to be.

Each of these examples may reflect a different aspect of attitude to reading such as reaction to reading or involvement with reading.

### **The Dimensions of Attitude**

There are four dimensions of attitude as follows:

1. Tendency or direction. An attitude has a tendency or direction. It may tend to be positive (called positive attitude) or it tend to be negative (called negative attitude), or it may be neither positive nor negative (called neutral attitude);
2. Intensity. An attitude has an intensity which means that two same tendencies or directions of attitude of different persons may have different intensities. So, such a tendency as positive attitude may vary in such intensities as positive and strongly positive or negative attitude may vary in such intensities as negative and strongly negative;
3. Width. An attitude has width, which means that the possessiveness or the negatives of one's attitude towards an object may refer to the whole aspects or only to some specific aspects of that object;
4. Consistency. An attitude has a consistency, which means that there should be a consistency between one's attitude statement or assessment and his or her behavior. One who has positive attitude towards an object should behave to show that he or she likes that object.

### **The Characteristics of Attitude**

Several important characteristics of attitude as follows:

1. Attitude has an object; that is it is tied to something. Probably because of a set of beliefs we have about it. In other words, attitude implies a subject-object relation;
2. Attitude has direction, degree, and commitment. Direction indicates whether the attitude is passive or negative;
3. Attitude is like belief is learned. We are not born with attitudes toward anything, but we organize them through direct or indirect experience with the object of our attitude.

### **The Functions of Attitude**

The functions of attitude are as varied as the function of skill, but these functions are much less easily identified. Indeed, a whole research literature has developed around the function of attitude divided four functions of attitude as follows:

1. The instrumental, adjective, or utilitarian function in which a person may develop an attitude because it enables him or her to become acceptable by his or her group;
2. The ego-defense function in which the person protects from acknowledging the basic truths about himself or the harsh realities in his external world. Freudian psychologists and neo-Freudian thinking have been preoccupied with this type of function and its outcome;
3. The value-expressive function, in which the individual derives satisfactions from expressing attitudes appropriate to his or her personal values and to his or her concept of himself or herself. This function is central to doctrines of ego psychology, which stresses the importance of self-expression, self-development, and self-realization;
4. The knowledge function, based upon the individual's need to give adequate structure to his or her universe. The search for meaning, the need to understand, the trend toward better organization of perceptions and beliefs to provide clarity and consistency for the individual, are other descriptions of this function.

### **Attitude as Input and Output**

In educational research, attitude is considered both as input and output. For example, a favorable attitude to language learning may be a vital input in

language achievement. In this sense, attitude is predisposing factor, affecting the outcomes of education. Attitude can also be an outcome itself. After a reading program or language learning course, the teacher/lecturer/instructor may hope for a favorable attitude to reading or the language learnt. Sometimes attitude may be as important outcome as achievement if further development or interest in subject is sought.

A skilled reader may shun books after formal education. A less skilled reader with a love of books may, because of a favorable attitude, carry on reading regularly into adulthood. Thus, attitude serves a double function. It is an important concept as it provides a presage and a product variable, predispose and an outcome. In socio-educational model, attitude is placed alongside intelligence, aptitude, and anxiety as an initial ingredient in bilingual proficiency. Language attitudes also appear in the model as an outcome alongside bilingual proficiency. It is also obvious that attitudes of learners affect learning process significantly.

### **STUDENTS' ATTITUDE IN READING COMPREHENSION**

In today's society, reading fulfill all practices encountered in daily life and is believed to be more than the acquisition of a discrete set of skills, it is an active, dynamic and interactive practice of meaning making that occurs between individuals, their world and their text (Anstey & Bull, 2004). Reading is not a static act, but constantly changes and adapts to the social environment in which it is practised. The extent to which students positively or negatively engage in reading at home and at school or university is influenced greatly by the attitude they have towards reading. Students' attitudes significantly influence their level of engagement with reading. Attitude has been described as "a state of mind, accompanied by feelings and emotions that make reading more or less probable" (Kush & Watkins, 2001: 315). Students' attitudes are perceived to be a function of the effect associated with the beliefs a person holds about the object. Reading attitudes are learnt characteristics that influence whether students engage in or avoid reading activities and they can be influenced by societal, familial, and school-based factors.

Attitude toward reading is an important educational outcome. Reading specialists have come to realize that attitudes are crucial in reading. It is apparent that attitudes are crucial factors and vital concerns in reading. Attitude may be defined as predispositions to act either favorably or unfavorably toward some group, institution, situation, or object. They are of course, highly related to interests but, tend to be thought of as a broader more generalized feelings, often not particularly conscious, but most certainly affecting individual behavior.

One of the problem student faces nowadays is not their ability to read but their lack of interest or attitude, indifference or rejection of reading. Studies based on reading habits have particularly focused on the importance of the promotion of specific strategies to: capitalize on their interests or attitude, make reading materials accessible, build a conducive environment, allow time to read in school or college, provide significant adult models and use motivational techniques.

The whole educational process is deeply influenced by attitudes. Attitudes obviously influence the teaching and learning process. Attitudes can be expressed both verbally and non verbally. On a simple level if we say that some event is a

good thing, we are expressing a positive attitude towards it. If we do not show a willingness to do something we have been asked to, we may be said to show a negative attitude. Attitude is hidden and also much more complex. Attitude can be expressed by a range of behavior.

Attitude toward reading is an important educational outcome and evaluative criteria due to its relationship to reading behavior and the refinement of reading skills. Because there are no guaranteed strategies in reading comprehension that will promote positive attitudes of the students. Attitudes towards reading have yet another value. It is apparent, then, that attitude is crucial factor. A student will usually not attempt to learn anything unless he or she is interested. Furthermore, as with any other skill, competence in reading can only be developed through practice. The more a student reads the more likely he or she will become a fluent reader.

### **CONCLUSION**

Students' attitudes and perceptions of what makes a good reader have also been studied extensively. The development of positive attitudes toward reading has been associated with sustained reading throughout the lifespan. Although students' attitudes toward reading are commonly identified by teacher/lecturer as important little time are spent developing positive reading attitudes in schools/universities. In addition, teacher/lecturer ratings of students and are often influenced more by how well the student reads. Studies also show that good readers generally possess more positive attitudes toward reading than poor readers do. Not all poor readers dislike reading, however, and many maintain positive reading attitudes despite limited skills and continuing frustration.

Reading attitude is a complex theoretical construct. It is defined in a various ways, for example, a system of feelings related to reading which causes the learner to approach or avoid a reading situation or a state of mind, accompanied by feelings and emotions that make reading more or less probable. In a general way, the attitude or language-learning success connection explained by Krashen's (1982) Monitor model, which suggests that language is acquired through an affective filter. This filter, which is constituted in part by attitude, many times has the power to either permit or block language input from reaching the part of a learner's brain that acquires language. Knowing that attitude can facilitate or impede second language acquisition, however, is not enough.

There are three principles of attitudes toward reading. First, an attitude has a focus; i.e. attitudes on specific topics or issues. Second, attitudes grow from experience with a topic, either direct or indirect. And third, attitudes typically fall somewhere on a continuum ranging from absolutely favorable on one extreme to absolutely unfavorable on the other extreme.

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