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ATTITUDES TOWARDS TEACHING AND LEARNING FOREIGN LANGUAGES OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS

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ABSTRACT

Attitude is very important in learning foreign languages. A positive attitude helps learners to become more interested in learning a foreign language and to help them succeed in their studies. The purposes of the study were to investigate problems and obstacles of teaching and learning foreign languages and to study the level of the students' attitudes towards teaching and learning foreign languages. The samples were 194 students selected by the purposive sampling technique. The data were analyzed by frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation. The study revealed that problems and obstacles of teaching and learning foreign languages were at low levels, namely, media and equipment, measurement and evaluation, teaching activities, instructors, and lesson content. Most of the instructors focused on speaking activities. Students' attitudes towards instructors were at the highest level. While media and equipment, lesson content, and measurement and evaluation were at high levels. Creating a good learning environment and managing productive teaching and learning can encourage students' good attitudes and effective participation in learning a foreign language.

Keywords: Attitude, teaching, learning, foreign language, student

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INTRODUCTION

Language is very important in the daily communication of people all over the world. Knowing a foreign language beyond the native language can lead to more opportunities in travel, career, and business opportunities. Attitude is very essential in language learning. Because it stimulates learners to be interested and be more effective in learning foreign languages (Tangpattanakit, 2020). Teaching management is a process of interaction between teachers and learners that could drive students to have a good attitude towards learning, experience, and behavior according to the goals set. However, research studies found that some students had a negative attitude towards learning a foreign language and a lack of motivation to learn a foreign language (Binmadnee et al., 2018; Nanthasudsawaeng, 2020).

Nanthasudsawaeng (2020) discovered that the key mission of instructors is to help encourage and support learners to be able to actively learn on their own by encouraging learners to use language-learning strategies or language learning behaviors correctly and appropriately for self-reliance. Wayo et al. (2020) mentioned that lesson content should be structured according to the course objectives. The text of the content should be clear, concise, easy to understand, and up-to-date at all times. Teaching materials, instructional media, and resources should be unique, attract students' attention, and stimulate learning. Measurement and evaluation of the learners' knowledge are very necessary both during and after the course and learning. Formative assessments such as asking questions, observing learners' behavior, reflecting, etc., and summative assessments such as examination with various tests to check students' understanding reflect the learning ability of the learners.

Teaching and learning management is not just the transfer of course content but it is an important tool that encourages learners to love learning. Instructors and their teaching methods play a significant role in causing different attitudes in learners. This study, therefore, focused on students' attitudes towards teaching and learning foreign languages in order to develop the management of foreign language teaching and learning to be more suitable and effective.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objectives of the study were to investigate problems and obstacles of teaching and learning foreign languages and to study the level of the students' attitudes towards teaching and learning foreign languages.

METHODOLOGY

This research was descriptive with a quantitative approach. The samples in this research were 194 students of the International School of Tourism, Suratthani Rajabhat University, Thailand in the second semester of the academic year of 2021. This research used the purposive sampling technique. A questionnaire with a .968 reliability index was deployed to be the research instrument. The raw data was collected through online questionnaires by using Google forms questionnaire. The frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation were used to analyze the data.

RESULTS

The results of the study found that the respondents of this study were 194 Thai students. Of these, there were 167 females with 86.1% and 27 males with 13.9%. Most of the respondents (33%) studied the Chinese language, 23.7% of them studied French, while the rest of them studied Japanese (15.5%), German (12%), Korean (10.3%), Russian (4.1%), and Malay (1%). According to the knowledge background of the sample group before learning a foreign language, 74.7% of them did not have a knowledge background. Half of them studied the airlines business program (50.0%), 38.7% of them studied the tourism program and the rest studied the hotel program at the International School of Tourism, Suratthani Rajabhat University.

Table 1. Problems and obstacles of teaching and learning foreign languages

Problems and obstacles of teaching and learning foreign languages	Mean	S.D.
Media and equipment	2.46	0.91
Measurement and evaluation	2.31	0.90
Teaching activities	2.23	0.79
Instructors	2.01	0.90
Lesson content	1.95	0.87
Total	2.24	0.90

As exhibited in Table 1, the study found that the overall problems and obstacles of teaching and learning foreign languages were at a low level (mean =2.24, S.D. =.90). The results showed that all 5 aspects were at low levels, namely, media and equipment (mean =2.46, S.D. =.91) measurement and evaluation (mean =2.31, S.D. =.90) teaching activities (mean =2.23, S.D. =.79) instructors (mean =2.01, S.D. =.90), and lesson content (mean =1.95, S.D. =.87) respectively.

Table 2. Activities in the foreign language classroom

Activities in the foreign language classroom	Mean	S.D.
Speaking	4.59	0.66
Playing games	4.18	0.86
Learning vocabulary and grammar	4.07	0.86
Reading	4.03	0.96
Doing homework and group work	3.62	0.93
Learning culture	3.58	1.00
Watching videos and clips	3.19	1.31
Listening to conversation and dialogues	3.16	1.32

From Table 2, the results indicated that the students reported that their instructors emphasized speaking activity in the foreign language classroom (mean =4.59, S.D. =.66). Meanwhile, playing games (mean =4.18, S.D. =.86), learning vocabulary and grammar (mean =4.07, S.D. =.86), reading (mean =4.03, S.D. =.96), doing homework and group work (mean =3.62, S.D. =.93), and learning culture (mean =3.58, S.D. =1.00) were generally organized in the classroom. The teaching activities that instructors focused on in a foreign language classroom at the moderate level were watching videos and clips (mean =3.19, S.D. =1.31) and listening to conversation and dialogues (mean =3.16, S.D. =1.32).

Table 3. Attitudes towards instructors

Attitudes towards instructors	Mean	S.D.
Instructors have trustworthy personalities and speak politely.	4.65	0.64
Instructors are responsible and punctual in teaching.	4.60	0.69
Instructors can explain the content clearly and easily to understand.	4.47	0.69
Instructors makes the overall teaching atmosphere interesting.	4.41	0.78
Instructors use a variety of teaching techniques.	4.41	0.79
Total	4.51	0.72

As exhibited in Table 3, the study found that the overall attitude towards instructors of the respondents was at the highest level (mean =4.51, S.D. =.72). The two highest-rated attitudes were instructors have trustworthy personalities and speak politely. (mean =4.65, S.D. =.64), and instructors are responsible and punctual in teaching. (mean =4.60, S.D. =.69).

Table 4. Attitudes towards media and equipment

Attitudes towards media and equipment	Mean	S.D.
Teaching materials are consistent with the course content.	4.42	0.71
There are a variety of exercises.	4.42	0.72
Teaching materials, such as PowerPoint, illustrations, video, clips are interesting.	4.41	0.76
Teaching materials are suitable for learners.	4.40	0.77
Total	4.41	0.74

Table 4 indicated that the overall attitude towards media and equipment of the respondents was at a high level (mean =4.41, S.D. =.74). The three high-rated attitudes were teaching materials are consistent with the course content. (mean =4.42, S.D. =.71), there are a variety of exercises. (mean =4.42, S.D. =.72), and teaching materials, such as PowerPoint, illustrations, video, clips are interesting. (mean =4.41, S.D. =.76) respectively.

Table 5. Attitudes towards lesson content

Attitudes towards lesson content	Mean	S.D.
Lesson content is useful for living and can lead to a career.	4.46	0.68
Lesson content is up-to-date and keeps up with the changes in the current situation.	4.41	0.71
Lesson content is suitable for the actual learning conditions and able to connect to a higher level of knowledge.	4.39	0.70
Lesson content is appropriate for the learner.	4.35	0.75
Lesson content can promote analytical thinking processes to solve problems.	4.33	0.72
Total	4.39	0.71

As illustrated in Table 5, the results showed that the overall attitude towards lesson content of the respondents was at a high level (mean =4.39, S.D. =.71). The three high-rated attitudes were lesson content is useful for living and can lead to a career. (mean =4.46, S.D. =.68), lesson content is up-to-date and keeps up with the changes in the current situation. (mean =4.41, S.D. =.71), and lesson content is suitable for the actual learning conditions and able to connect to a higher level of knowledge. (mean =4.39, S.D. =.70) respectively.

Table 6. Attitudes towards measurement and evaluation

Attitudes towards measurement and evaluation	Mean	S.D.
The measurement and evaluation criteria are clear.	4.34	0.76
The measurement and evaluation methods are diverse.	4.32	0.82
The measurement and evaluation can evaluate learners' knowledge and development.	4.27	0.77
The measurement and evaluation can lead to self-improvement.	4.27	0.83
The measurement and evaluation are revealed.	4.16	0.98
Total	4.27	0.83

Table 6 indicated that the overall attitude towards measurement and evaluation of the respondents was at a high level (mean =4.27, S.D. =.83). The three high-rated attitudes were the measurement and evaluation criteria are clear. (mean =4.34, S.D. =.76), the measurement and evaluation methods are diverse. (mean =4.32, S.D. =.82), and the measurement and evaluation can evaluate learners' knowledge and development. (mean =4.27, S.D. =.77) respectively.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The purposes of the study were to investigate problems and obstacles of teaching and learning foreign languages and to study the level of the students' attitudes towards teaching and learning foreign languages. The result of the study indicated that the problems and obstacles of teaching and learning foreign languages were at low levels, namely, media and equipment, measurement and evaluation, teaching activities, instructors, and lesson content. However, some students reported that Instructors assigned too much homework that caused stress of studying. It would be great if teachers should reduce homework or assignments. It is recommended that instructors should provide a variety of activities during lessons both individual and group activities, let students play more vocabulary games to relieve stress. The use of a variety of teaching activities, materials, and methods such as games, videos, clips, and illustrations could help stimulate learners' interest. Focusing on engaging everyone through speaking, writing, or listening activities will increase students' interest and intention in learning a foreign language. The research of Nanthasudsawaeng (2020) reported that circumstances and problems on English language learning of students were at a moderate level. Students with low-level English proficiency had a low level of attitudes towards English language learning. Therefore, instructors should develop and use diverse language teaching techniques which are appropriate to the context and environment of the learners, emphasize all students' participation in classes and make the class fun and easy. Moreover, the lesson content should be appropriate to the conditions of the learners so that all learners can gain knowledge and be able to expand their knowledge of the language in the future. In view of the fact that each person has a different language background (Yapha et al.,2017; Muhamat et al., 2021).

The study revealed that students had very good attitudes towards the instructor. They also had good attitudes towards media and equipment, lesson content, and measurement and evaluation. The finding of this study found that most of the

students have a good attitude towards instructors. Because they have knowledge and abilities in the subjects they teach, explain lesson content in detail and clearly. Moreover, instructors are friendly with students. They also give advice and answer questions both during and outside the classroom. It can be said that instructors profoundly understand the problems of their students' readiness for learning a foreign language. As a result, the teachers' expectation of the learner is gradual. Therefore, the management of learning foreign language instruction focuses on creating a learning atmosphere in the classroom, emphasizing the students' participation in learning. Teachers, therefore, try to use tools, programs, and teaching materials to help make the foreign language classroom enjoyable. This is consistent with the results of a study by Muhamat et al. (2021) that teachers play an important role in creating a teaching and learning atmosphere. There should be a variety of teaching techniques, emphasizing students' participation in learning activities, giving students an opportunity to ask questions. Teachers should also have a good personality so that learners have confidence and trust in studying. Nanthasudsawaeng (2020) emphasized that teachers who have competent and interesting language teaching skills can motivate students in learning and have a good attitude towards language learning.

The results of this study indicated that it is necessary that instructors provide books, learning materials, learning content, worksheets for learners before attending the classroom that can help learners to read, understand and review the lessons before, during, and after the class. Teachers should compile lesson contents or materials used for teaching and upload them on a webpage or an online database that students can learn and review by themselves later. This finding is aligning with Alsoud and Harasis's (2021) research which revealed that e-learning is a distance learning strategy that enables universities to use a variety of online learning platforms. Various online learning media facilitate students' access to teaching materials and learning activities similar to normal learning in the classroom.

Recommendations for further studies, it is recommended to study students' behavior and satisfaction in teaching and learning a foreign language and to conduct the development of a foreign language teaching management model.

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