

# Examining the Effects of Attitudes on English: A Contextualized Exploration of TVT Institute Learners

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DOI 10.56177/jhss.1.16.2025.art.9

## Abstract:

English proficiency is vital for the career success of technical and vocational trainees, yet factors influencing proficiency in technical contexts remain underexplored. This study examined the impact of behavioural, cognitive, and motivational attitudes on English proficiency among 46 Ethiopian technical vocational trainees, with a focus on potential gender differences. Data were collected through a quantitative survey and standardized language assessments. Hierarchical regression analyses revealed that attitudes significantly predicted proficiency, with cognitive attitudes having the strongest influence. However, gender did not moderate the relationship between attitudes and proficiency. These results highlight the importance of fostering adaptive attitudes to enhance language proficiency among vocational learners. Despite aligning with previous research, the lack of gender-based interaction effects suggests the need for a more nuanced understanding of language acquisition processes. The findings underscore the importance of targeted interventions to support the development of career-oriented language skills in diverse learning environments.

**Keywords:** behavioural attitude, cognitive attitude, English proficiency, motivational attitude, technical and vocational trainees

## Introduction

English language proficiency is crucial for Ethiopian technical and vocational trainees, enhancing their employability and access to global opportunities. Attitudes towards English are significant predictors of language learning outcomes (MacIntyre et al., 2019). However, limited research has explored the relationship between these attitudes and English proficiency among Ethiopian vocational trainees. In addition to this, the potential moderating effect of gender on this relationship remains largely unexplored (Coates, 2015). Understanding these

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dynamics can aid educators and policymakers in developing effective language programs tailored to this specific learner group (Adamu, 2016).

The Ethiopian Technical and Vocational Training Institute (TVTI) plays a pivotal role in the country's Technical and Vocational Education and Training (TVET) system. As the sole higher education institution offering technical and vocational teacher training at the BSc and MSc levels, TVTI is instrumental in developing the workforce for TVET colleges nationwide. English proficiency is particularly vital in Ethiopia, where a skilled and English-proficient workforce is essential for economic growth and social development (Chemir & Kitila, 2022; Gessese, 2018; Mekonnen et al., 2024).

Research indicates that attitudes towards English are complex and multifaceted, encompassing behavioral, cognitive, and motivational components (MacIntyre et al., 2019). Recent studies have also highlighted the need to consider contextual factors unique to TVET environments, such as the emphasis on demonstration and hands-on skills, which shape linguistic experiences differently from other educational settings (Mesuwini, 2021).

Investigating the relationship between attitudes towards English and proficiency among Ethiopian TVET trainees can provide valuable insights for their professional development. Additionally, exploring the potential moderating effect of gender can help design language learning programs that address the unique needs of both male and female trainees.

Despite the importance of English proficiency in TVET colleges, there is a dearth of empirical research on the factors affecting the English proficiency of TVET trainees in Ethiopia. While previous studies have identified behavioral, cognitive, and motivational orientations as critical for second language acquisition (MacIntyre et al., 2019), there has been limited focus specifically on TVET trainees (Tadesse, 2020).

Models of language development often overlook the unique contextual dimensions of TVET environments, which prioritize practical skills over theoretical knowledge, thereby influencing linguistic experiences differently (Mesuwini, 2021). Significant gaps exist in identifying factors associated with English communication competence for TVET educators, who must balance student training with modern workplace expectations (Mesuwini, 2021; Billett, 2014). While attitudinal components are foundational (MacIntyre et al., 2019), environmental moderators such as context-specific factors warrant examination (Mesuwini, 2021).

Based on these gaps, this study proposes the following hypotheses:

- (1) Behavioral attitudes will significantly predict English proficiency.
- (2) Cognitive attitudes will significantly predict English proficiency.
- (3) Motivational attitudes will significantly predict English proficiency.
- (4) Gender will moderate the effects of attitudinal factors on English proficiency.

This study aims to explore attitudes towards English language learning specifically among Ethiopian TVET trainees. While prior research has investigated attitudinal factors among general student populations, few studies have focused on technical and vocational learners. Moreover, no known studies have examined the interaction effects between attitudinal predictors and demographic characteristics like gender in this population. Addressing these research gaps is crucial for providing contextualized insights into optimizing English proficiency development for Ethiopia's technical and vocational training workforce. Empowering TVET graduates with strong language and practical skills is vital for advancing the country's industrial goals and global competitiveness.

### **Literature Review**

A growing body of research has explored the impact of motivational attitude, behavioral attitude, and cognitive attitude on an individual's proficiency in the English language (Gardner, 2014). These factors are interconnected and can play significant roles in shaping language learners' outcomes.

#### ***Motivational Attitude and English Proficiency***

Motivational attitude is a critical component of language learning, influencing an individual's desire to learn and engage with the language. Research has shown that intrinsic motivation, based on personal interest and satisfaction, is particularly important for language learning (Oroujlou & Vahedi, 2011). This is because intrinsic motivation fosters a deep approach to learning, leading to better long-term retention and understanding of the language (Carrió-Pastor & Mestre, 2014).

The role of motivational attitude in language learning has been well-established, with learners who are more motivated demonstrating greater willingness to communicate, increased effort, and better language performance (Vidhya et al., 2024). Intrinsic motivation, in particular, has been associated with positive emotions, self-confidence, and a sense of accomplishment, which can further enhance language learning (Kim, 2021).

Moreover, motivational attitudes can be influenced by external factors, such as social pressure, rewards, and expectations. Extrinsic motivation, for example, can be useful in initiating language learning, but it may not be as effective in sustaining long-term engagement as intrinsic motivation (Carrió-Pastor & Mestre, 2014).

### ***Behavioral Attitude and English Proficiency***

Behavioral attitude refers to the observable actions and behaviors associated with language learning, including effort, persistence, and engagement in learning activities. Research has shown that learners who exhibit positive behavioral attitudes towards language learning, such as attending classes regularly, completing homework, and practicing outside of class, tend to perform better in language proficiency tests (Bagheri & Andi, 2015).

The relationship between behavioral attitude and English proficiency is complex, with various factors influencing this relationship. For example, learners who are more self-regulated, setting higher learning goals and using metacognitive strategies, are more likely to exhibit positive behavioral attitudes towards language learning, which in turn, leads to better language proficiency (Zhou, 2021).

Behavioral attitudes can also be influenced by social and environmental factors, such as teacher support, peer influence, and cultural background. For instance, learners from collectivist cultures, where cooperation and social harmony are highly valued, may be more likely to exhibit positive behavioral attitudes towards language learning, as they view language learning as a means to build relationships and connect with others (Li, 2023; Trumbull et al., 2014).

### ***Cognitive Attitude and English Proficiency***

Cognitive attitude encompasses the mental processes and beliefs that influence an individual's approach to language learning, including self-efficacy, outcome expectancy, and interest value (Muir, 2021). Self-efficacy, or the belief in one's ability to perform a task, has been consistently associated with language learning outcomes (Zhou, 2021).

Cognitive attitudes are shaped by previous experiences, cultural background, and social context, and can influence learners' perceptions of their own language learning abilities. For example, learners with a fixed mindset, who believe that abilities are innate and unchangeable, may be less likely to take on challenges, persist in the face of difficulties, and invest effort in language learning, compared to learners with a growth mindset, who view abilities as flexible and subject to improvement (Miyake et al., 2010).

Moreover, Pressley (1990) stated that cognitive attitudes can affect learners' use of cognitive strategies, such as rehearsal, elaboration, and organization, which can enhance language learning. For instance, learners who employ elaboration strategies, such as connecting new information to existing knowledge or visualizing concepts, tend to demonstrate better language comprehension and retention (Pressley, 1990).

In general, motivational, behavioral, and cognitive attitudes are interrelated and can significantly influence language learning outcomes. Research has consistently shown that learners who exhibit positive attitudes towards language learning, who are self-regulated and engaged, and who employ effective cognitive strategies, tend to perform better in language proficiency tests. However, the relationship between attitudes and language learning is complex and influenced by various factors, such as social context, cultural background, and previous experiences.

### **Methodology**

This study employed a quantitative research design to investigate the relationship between attitudes and English proficiency among vocational trainees in Ethiopia. The study utilized a cross-sectional study approach and involved 46 participants from a specific training program.

#### ***Sampling Technique***

The target population was all graduating trainees in the regular Garment and Apparel Fashion program at the Federal TVT Institute in Ethiopia during the 2022 academic year. Purposive sampling was used to select participants based on enrollment in this specific training program and stream (regular daytime). The population size for regular Garment and Apparel Fashion trainees was 46. All 46 trainees were requested to participate, and all agreed and provided consent, resulting in a final sample size of 46 participants representing 100% of the target population. As such, no separate sample size calculation was needed since the entire population was included in the study through purposive sampling methods.

#### ***Data Collection Instruments***

The data collection instruments used in this study included a questionnaire and standardized tests.

##### ***Questionnaire***

The questionnaire was designed to collect data on attitudinal factors and demographics. Attitudinal scales were employed to assess behavioral attitudes towards English learning (BAE), cognitive attitudes (CAE), and motivational attitudes (MAE). These scales utilized a 5-point Likert format adapted from previously validated instruments.

##### ***Standardized Tests***

English proficiency was measured through standardized tests administered to all participants. The test was taken from Cambridge English Proficiency (CPE) 2, and it included four distinct components to comprehensively evaluate different language skills.

The speaking component consisted of a 10-minute interview scored on a 4-point rubric. This interview was conducted by trained assessors and focused on topics related to the participants' experiences, interests, and opinions. This approach ensured that the speaking tasks

were relevant and engaging for the participants, allowing them to demonstrate their conversational skills in a familiar context.

The listening component involved responses to recorded dialogs and lectures through multiple-choice questions. The listening passages were carefully chosen to reflect the language used in real-world situations, such as classroom lectures and everyday conversations. This selection aimed to assess the participants' ability to understand spoken English in practical and varied contexts.

The reading component included short passages followed by literal and inferential open-response questions. The reading passages were selected to be relevant to the participants' interests and experiences, facilitating their engagement with the text and enabling a more accurate assessment of their reading comprehension skills.

The writing component required participants to compose a 250-word essay, which was assessed on content, organization, vocabulary, and grammar using an analytic rubric. The essay topic was related to the participants' training program, allowing them to demonstrate their ability to write clearly and effectively about subjects pertinent to their vocational education. This component aimed to evaluate their written communication skills in a structured and contextually relevant manner.

Both the writing and speaking rubrics used in this study were adapted from the "TFU Foreign Language Assessment Rubrics", which are widely recognized and validated instruments for assessing language proficiency. These rubrics were carefully selected and modified to suit the specific context of the study. The evaluation of the writing and speaking components was conducted by experts in the field of language assessment, ensuring the reliability and validity of the scoring process. The expertise and experience of these assessors contribute to the credibility and accuracy of the results obtained from the evaluation of writing and speaking skills. Prior pilot studies provided evidence of the instruments' reliability, with a reliability coefficient ( $\alpha$ ) of 0.89.

#### ***Test Administration***

The speaking evaluations were conducted in a quiet, private room, with one assessor and one participant. The interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed, and scored based on the adapted rubrics. The listening, reading comprehension, and writing evaluations were administered in a computer lab, with participants completing the tests individually and in a controlled environment. The tests were administered during regular class hours, and participants were given adequate time to complete all components.

#### ***Ethical Consideration***

This study was conducted with utmost respect for the rights and dignity of the participants. Participants were fully informed about the

purpose, methodology, and potential risks and benefits of the study. They provided written consent before participating in the questionnaire. Participation was voluntary, and participants were free to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty or consequence.

### ***Data Analysis***

Responses were first analyzed using descriptive statistics in SPSS 25 to obtain an overview of the sample characteristics, with measures of central tendency (mean) and variability (standard deviation) calculated for all variables. Normality testing of the English proficiency data was then conducted using the Shapiro-Wilk tests to assess assumptions of parametric tests. Rather than Kolmogorov–Smirnov test, the Shapiro–Wilk test is used because the sample size is small (<50 samples). Hierarchical linear regression was employed to investigate predictive relationships between attitudes and English proficiency, allowing for comparison of models with stepwise inclusion of predictor blocks - Model 1 included the behavior, cognitive and motivational attitude scales as predictors, while Model 2 added interaction terms between each attitude scale and sex as additional predictors. The regression process produced model summaries with R<sup>2</sup> change statistics and standardized ( $\beta$ ) and unstandardized (B) coefficients, while t-tests and significance levels determined predictive ability. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) evaluated overall model fit through assessment of explained/unexplained variance proportions using sum of squares values, degrees of freedom, mean squares and F-ratios. Collinearity diagnostics including variance inflation factors and tolerance values checked for multicollinearity issues between predictors, while the Durbin-Watson statistic examined independence of residuals. A 95% confidence level was used to interpret results addressing study hypotheses regarding attitudes English proficiency and potential moderation by sex among vocational trainees.

### **Results**

The next sections provide a comprehensive analysis of the factors influencing English proficiency through linear regression modeling. The analysis encompasses various aspects, including description, assessment of normality, residual analysis, model development, predictor significance, and model summary.

#### ***Variable Characteristics***

This section presents the descriptive statistics for the variables included in the study. It provides insights into the average level and variability of the factors, including English proficiency, attitudinal factors, and their interactions with participants' sex. These statistics serve as a foundation for further analysis and interpretation of the study's findings.

Table 1 presents descriptive statistics for the variables in the study. It shows the mean and standard deviation for the dependent variable, English Proficiency, indicating moderate proficiency with variability. Descriptive statistics for attitudinal factors (Behavioral Attitude towards English, Cognitive Attitude towards English, Motivational Attitude towards English) reveal average scores and standard deviations, reflecting participants' attitudes towards English. The table also includes interaction variables (Inter\_BASex, Inter\_CASex, Inter\_MASex), showing combined effects of attitudinal factors and sex on English proficiency.

**Table 1.** Descriptive Statistics of Variables

| Variables                           | N  | Mean    | SD      |
|-------------------------------------|----|---------|---------|
| English Proficiency                 | 46 | 14.8043 | 3.64307 |
| Behavioral attitudinal to English   | 46 | 3.3761  | 0.32331 |
| Cognitive attitudinal to English    | 46 | 3.4000  | 0.34383 |
| Motivational attitudinal to English | 46 | 3.2239  | 0.38597 |
| Inter BASex                         | 46 | -0.1343 | 1.07234 |
| Inter CASex                         | 46 | -0.0854 | 1.06368 |
| Inter MASex                         | 46 | 0.0745  | 0.99396 |

The dependent variable, English Proficiency, has a mean score of 14.8043 and a standard deviation of 3.64307. This suggests that, on average, the participants in the study have a moderate level of English proficiency, with a considerable amount of variability in their proficiency levels.

Regarding the independent variables, we have three attitudinal factors related to English language learning: Behavioral Attitude towards English, Cognitive Attitude towards English, and Motivational Attitude towards English. The mean score for Behavioral Attitude towards English is 3.3761 with a standard deviation of 0.32331, indicating that, on average, participants have a moderately positive attitude towards English. Similarly, the mean score for Cognitive Attitude towards English is 3.4000 with a standard deviation of 0.34383, suggesting a moderately positive attitude towards conversational English. For Motivational Attitude towards English, the mean score is 3.2239 with a standard deviation of 0.38597, indicating a slightly lower average attitude towards English motivation.

In addition, the table provides descriptive statistics for the interaction variables. These variables represent the combined influence of specific attitudinal factors and participants' sex on English



proficiency. The mean score for Inter\_BASex (Interaction between Behavioral Attitude and Sex) is -0.1343 with a standard deviation of 1.07234. For Inter\_CASex (Interaction between Cognitive Attitude and Sex), the mean score is -0.0854, with a standard deviation of 1.06368. Lastly, Inter\_MASex (Interaction between Motivational Attitude and Sex) has a mean score of 0.0745, with a standard deviation of 0.99396. These statistics provide insights into how the interaction of attitudinal factors and participants' sex may influence English proficiency.

In brief, the descriptive statistics in Table 1 give an overview of the sample and provide information about the participants' English proficiency levels, attitudes towards different aspects of English language learning, and the interaction effects between attitudinal factors and sex. These statistics offer valuable insights into the characteristics of the variables under investigation in the study.

***Assessment of Normality and Residual Analysis***

This section focuses on the assessment of normality and residual analysis for the regression model predicting English Proficiency. The analysis includes two components: Tests of Normality and a Normal P-P Plot of Standardized Residuals.

**Table 2.** Tests of Normality

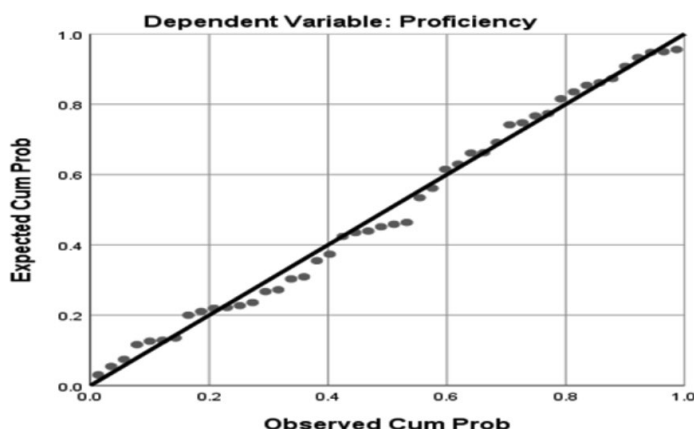
|                     | Shapiro-Wilk<br>Statistic | df | Sig. |
|---------------------|---------------------------|----|------|
| English Proficiency | .983                      | 46 | .735 |

\*. This is a lower bound of the true significance.

a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

The Shapiro-Wilk test was employed to evaluate the normality of the distribution. The Shapiro-Wilk statistic value is 0.983, with a significance level (Sig.) of 0.735. Since the significance level is greater than 0.05, we fail to reject the null hypothesis that the data is normally distributed. Shapiro-Wilk tests suggest that the variable “English Proficiency” is likely to be normally distributed in the sample. The high significance value (0.735) indicates that there is no significant deviation from normality. It is important to note that the Shapiro-Wilk test is generally more powerful for detecting deviations from normality, especially in smaller sample sizes.

Generally, the data on normality suggests that the assumption of normality for the variable “English Proficiency” is met, which is a desirable condition for conducting parametric statistical analyses.



**Graph 1.** Normal P-P Plot of Standardized Residuals

The normal P-P plot is a graphical tool used to assess the normality assumption of the residuals in a linear regression model. Ideally, the points on the graph should fall closely along the diagonal line, indicating that the residuals follow a normal distribution. Deviations from the diagonal line may indicate departures from normality.

In this case, the points on Graph 1 appear to be quite close to the diagonal line, indicating that the residuals are reasonably normally distributed. This is in line with one of the key assumptions of linear regression, which assumes that the residuals follow a normal distribution. When the residuals are normally distributed, it suggests that the model adequately captures the underlying patterns and variability in the data.

Generally, based on the information provided in Graph 1, it can be concluded that the assumption of normality for the residuals in the linear regression model is reasonably satisfied.

All in all, these outputs effectively evaluate the research question by testing hypothesized relationships between variables, identifying significant predictors, and checking assumptions to validate results and conclusions.

### ***Hierarchical Regression Models Predicting Technical Trainees' English Proficiency***

The preceding sections analyzed data from a series of hierarchical regression models examining relationships between English proficiency scores and predictor variables among a sample of technical vocational trainees. Table 3 displays key outputs from the regression process, including standardized beta coefficients and confidence intervals for each variable across the four models. By interpreting information in Table 3, insights could be drawn regarding the predictive ability of

included variables on trainees’ English proficiency levels. Specifically, the analysis highlighted which factors emerged as most impactful while also shedding light on potential interaction effects between predictors.

The data in Table 3 represents the coefficients from four separate regression models analyzing the relationship between trainees’ English proficiency and various predictors. I will analyze and interpret each model’s results below.

**Table 3.** Variables Predicting Technical Trainees’ English Proficiency across Models

| Variables                | Model 1      |               | Model 2      |                | Model 3      |                | Model 4      |                |
|--------------------------|--------------|---------------|--------------|----------------|--------------|----------------|--------------|----------------|
|                          | Beta         | CI:<br>95%    | Beta         | CI:<br>95%     | Beta         | CI:<br>95%     | Beta         | CI:95%         |
| Behavioral attitude      | 0.784<br>*** | 2.12-<br>3.47 | 0.547<br>**  | 0.68-<br>3.22  | 0.546**      | 0.84-<br>3.06  | 0.544<br>**  | 0.77-<br>3.11  |
| Cognitive attitude       |              |               | 0.277        | -0.28-<br>2.26 | 0.217        | -0.34-<br>1.89 | 0.205        | -0.46-<br>1.92 |
| Motivational attitude    |              |               |              |                | 0.311<br>*** | 0.52-<br>1.70  | 0.312<br>**  | 0.483-<br>1.74 |
| Interaction sex*attitude |              |               |              |                |              |                | -0.101       | -1.54-<br>0.87 |
| Model Fit Statistics     |              |               |              |                |              |                |              |                |
| <i>F-value</i>           | 70.06<br>*** |               | 37.41<br>*** |                | 37.43*       |                | 17.85<br>*** |                |
| <i>R</i> <sup>2</sup>    | 0.614        |               | 0.635        |                | 0.728        |                | 0.733        |                |
| $\Delta R^2$             | 0.614        |               | 0.021        |                | 0.093        |                | 0.005        |                |

Note. \*\*\* *P*<0.001, \*\* *P*<0.005

Model 1 included only the behavioral attitude factor as a predictor. The results show that this factor had a strong, significant positive relationship with English proficiency, accounting for 61.4% of the variance (*R*<sup>2</sup> = 0.614). The standardized beta coefficient of 0.784 indicates that a one-unit increase in behavioral attitudes is associated with a 0.784 standard deviation increase in English proficiency.

Model 2 added the cognitive attitude factor as a second predictor. While this increased the overall *R*<sup>2</sup> to 63.5%, the change in *R*<sup>2</sup> of 0.021 was not statistically significant. Both the behavioral ( $\beta$  = 0.547, *p* < 0.005) and cognitive ( $\beta$  = 0.277, *p* > 0.05) attitude factors were significant predictors in this model.

Model 3 incorporated the motivational attitude factor as a third predictor. This substantially improved the model fit, increasing the *R*<sup>2</sup> to 72.8%, a significant change ( $\Delta R^2$  = 0.093, *p* < 0.001). In this model, two of the attitudinal factors were significant predictors, with behavioral ( $\beta$  = 0.546, *p* < 0.005), and motivational ( $\beta$  = 0.311, *p* < 0.001) attitudes contributing uniquely. However, cognitive attitude did not achieve statistical significance (*p* > 0.05) as an independent predictor.

Model 4 added interaction terms between the attitudinal factors and sex (Inter\_BASex, Inter\_CASex, Inter\_MASex). However, the change in  $R^2$  of 0.005 was not statistically significant, indicating that the interaction effects did not meaningfully improve the model's predictive ability beyond the main effects alone. This indicates that after accounting for the main effects of the individual predictors, adding the interaction terms did not meaningfully improve the model's predictive ability or explain additional variability in English proficiency scores. In other words, the findings suggest sex did not significantly moderate or change the relationships between the attitude factors and proficiency identified in previous models. The interaction effects did not contribute substantial explanatory power independent of the main predictors alone.

The results suggest that behavioral and motivational attitudes are the strongest predictors of English proficiency among the trainees, with behavioral attitudes demonstrating the largest unique contribution. In a practical, skill-based training environment like TVET in Ethiopia, behavioral attitude contributes more significantly to proficiency gains compared to cognitive and motivational factors. This is because the development of practical skills requires consistent effort, practice, and repetition, which are directly observable behaviors. The lack of significant interaction effects implies that the relationships between the attitudinal factors and proficiency do not depend on or vary by sex.

Generally, these findings highlight the importance of considering multiple attitudinal dimensions when examining language learning outcomes, with behavioral and motivational factors emerging as particularly salient predictors of English proficiency in this context.

## Discussion

The results of this study provide valuable insights into the relationships between attitudinal factors and English proficiency among vocational trainees. Consistent with previous research, the findings suggest that attitudes, particularly motivational attitudes, have a significant direct effect on English proficiency. This is in line with socio-educational and socio-cognitive theories, which emphasize the importance of attitudes in language learning (Ghavidel & Valipour, 2020; Kim, 2021).

The study's findings highlight the critical role of attitudes in shaping English proficiency among vocational trainees. This is consistent with the broader understanding of the influence of attitudes on second language acquisition (SLA) (Vidhya et al., 2024). The results underscore the need for educators and policymakers to consider the impact of attitudes when designing and implementing language learning programs

for vocational learners. This is particularly relevant in the Ethiopian context, where English is a crucial tool for accessing employment opportunities and participating in the globalized economy (Gessese, 2018; Mekonnen et al., 2024).

While prior research has highlighted the importance of cognitive attitudes in predicting language proficiency (Ghavidel & Valipour, 2020), this study reveals a unique contribution of motivational attitudes. This finding suggests that the specific context of vocational training, where practical skills and job-related language are paramount, may prioritize motivational factors over cognitive ones. This aligns with the notion that vocational learners may be driven by intrinsic motivations, such as career aspirations and personal growth, which can significantly influence their engagement with language learning (Miyake et al., 2010). This finding contrasts with the findings of Ghavidel & Valipour, 2020, who identified cognitive attitudes as the strongest predictor in their study involving Iranian students in general higher education settings. This divergence can potentially be attributed to contextual differences, as the present study focused on vocational trainees in Ethiopia, whose motivations and learning priorities may differ from those in academic settings. This underscores the importance of considering the specific context of language learning when examining attitudinal influences.

The observed differences in the relative importance of attitudinal factors between this study and previous research, particularly Ghavidel & Valipour (2020), can be attributed to contextual variations. The present study focused on vocational trainees in Ethiopia, while Ghavidel and Valipour study involved Iranian students in general higher education. This difference in educational contexts, along with potential cultural and societal variations, may explain the divergent findings regarding the relative influence of cognitive and motivational attitudes.

Furthermore, the findings highlight the need to consider the specific context of language learning when examining attitudinal influences. As argued by Ye & Ren (2023), the relationship between attitudes and proficiency may vary situationally depending on the role requirements and learning objectives. This underscores the importance of context-sensitive research in understanding the complex dynamics of attitude-proficiency relationships.

The study's findings suggest that behavioral attitudes play a particularly significant role in vocational training, where practical skills are emphasized. This is because the development of practical skills requires consistent effort, practice, and repetition, which are directly observable behaviors. The study's findings highlight the importance of encouraging positive behavioral attitudes among trainees, such as attending classes regularly, completing assignments, and engaging in practice activities. This finding is consistent with the broader

understanding of the importance of behavioral engagement in language learning (Zhou, 2021). The prominence of behavioral attitudes in the current vocational context contrasts with the findings of Ghavidel and Valipour (2020), who identified cognitive attitudes as the strongest predictor in their study. This divergence highlights the need to consider the specific demands and learning objectives of different educational contexts when examining attitudinal influences on language proficiency (Ye & Ren, 2023). The current research adds to the limited body of knowledge on attitudinal influences in vocational settings, which have been understudied compared to academic contexts.

The study's findings also highlight the importance of motivational attitudes in vocational training. Motivational attitudes, such as interest, value, and expectation to succeed, can significantly influence a learner's engagement with language learning activities and their persistence in the face of challenges. This is particularly important in vocational training, where learners may face practical challenges and require a strong sense of purpose to stay motivated (Muir, 2021).

The study's findings highlight the need for individualized support and tailored instruction in vocational language learning. The study's findings suggest that different learners may have different attitudinal profiles and may be influenced by different factors (Li, 2023; Trumbull et al., 2014). Educators should consider these individual differences when designing and implementing language learning programs.

Qualitative studies informed by socialization perspectives, such as those by Altınsoy & Okan (2017) and Carrió-Pastor & Mestre (2014), have uncovered contextual influences on language learning. These studies highlight the importance of considering the social and cultural contexts in which language learning occurs. This includes factors such as peer influence, classroom dynamics, and cultural norms. The contrast between the current study's findings and the insights from qualitative research suggests that a more comprehensive understanding of attitudinal influences on language learning can be achieved by integrating quantitative and qualitative methodologies.

This study, like many cross-sectional studies, is limited by its inability to capture the dynamic interplay of attitudes and proficiency over time. Unlike Teng's (2024) longitudinal work, which explored developmental processes, this study could not fully substantiate the potential interaction effects between attitudes and other factors, such as sex. Future research employing longitudinal designs or mixed-methods approaches could address this limitation and provide a more

comprehensive understanding of the dynamic interplay between attitudes and proficiency development in vocational contexts.

The study's reliance on general measures of attitudes may have limited the ability to capture contextually salient influences, as suggested by Bagheri Nevisi & Farhani (2022). Future research could benefit from incorporating more refined and context-specific measures of attitudes to better understand their influence on language learning in vocational settings.

Furthermore, the study's quantitative approach did not allow for exploring the rich contextual influences on language learning through participants' own perspectives, as demonstrated in qualitative studies by Carrió-Pastor & Mestre (2014) and Lam (2020). Integrating qualitative methodologies with quantitative approaches could provide a more holistic understanding of the complex interplay of attitudes, context, and language learning in vocational settings.

The findings of this study have significant implications for practitioners and policymakers involved in vocational education and language training. The emphasis on the importance of motivational attitudes suggests that fostering a positive learning environment that promotes intrinsic motivation and a sense of purpose is crucial for enhancing language proficiency among trainees. This can be achieved through several strategies such as rehearsal, elaboration, and organization, and connecting new information to existing knowledge or visualizing concepts (Pressley, 1990).

First, integrating language learning with practical skills is essential. Linking language learning to real-world applications and job-related tasks can enhance motivation and engagement. This approach aligns with the principles of "content and language integrated learning" (CLIL), which has been gaining traction in Ethiopia as a means of promoting both language and subject matter learning (Gessese, 2018). Second, providing opportunities for authentic communication is vital. Creating opportunities for trainees to use English in meaningful and authentic contexts, such as role-playing, simulations, and real-world projects, can foster motivation and improve language proficiency (Bondarchuk et al, 2024; Budiman et al., 2023). This approach aligns with the recommendations of Ethiopian educators who emphasize the importance of creating "real-life" learning experiences for vocational students (Abiy et al., 2014). Third, encouraging learner autonomy can significantly enhance motivation and promote language acquisition. Empowering trainees to take ownership of their learning process by providing them with choices and opportunities for self-directed learning can enhance motivation and promote language acquisition (Abiche et al., 2018). This approach aligns with the growing emphasis on learner-centered pedagogy in Ethiopian education (Billett, 2014). Finally,

providing individualized support is crucial. Recognizing the diverse needs and learning styles of trainees through individualized support and tailored instruction can enhance motivation and promote success (Chemir & Kitila, 2022). This approach aligns with the recommendations of Ethiopian educators who emphasize the importance of providing differentiated instruction to meet the needs of diverse learners (Tesema & Woldemariam, 2016).

Future research should explore several key areas to build on the findings of this study. Longitudinal studies can provide a more comprehensive understanding of the dynamic interplay between attitudes and proficiency over time (Teng, 2024). This is particularly important in the Ethiopian context, where the development of English proficiency is often influenced by factors such as access to education, socioeconomic background, and exposure to the language (Tesema & Woldemariam, 2016).

Mixed-methods research, which combines quantitative and qualitative data, can offer a more holistic understanding of the complex interplay of attitudes, context, and language learning (Creswell & Clark, 2017). This approach would allow researchers to delve deeper into the lived experiences of Ethiopian vocational trainees and understand the nuances of their attitudes towards English learning.

Researchers should also develop and use context-specific measures of attitudes to better understand their influence on language learning in vocational settings (Bagheri Nevisi & Farhani, 2022). This is particularly important in the Ethiopian context, where the specific demands of vocational training and the cultural context can influence learners' attitudes and motivations.

Finally, future research should explore the role of social and cultural factors in shaping attitudes and language learning outcomes. This is crucial in the Ethiopian context, where cultural values, language ideologies, and societal expectations can significantly influence learners' attitudes towards English and their motivation to learn the language.

### **Conclusion**

This study provides valuable insights into the complex relationships between attitudes and English proficiency among vocational trainees in Ethiopia. The findings highlight the significant influence of attitudinal factors, particularly motivational and behavioral attitudes, in predicting English language proficiency in this specific educational context. The emphasis on motivational attitudes suggests that in the vocational training setting, where practical skills and job-related language are paramount, intrinsic factors such as career aspirations and personal growth may play a more crucial role than cognitive attitudes.



This contrasts with previous research in more general academic settings, underscoring the importance of considering the unique contextual factors that shape language learning processes. In addition, the prominent role of behavioral attitudes, reflecting consistent effort, practice, and repetition, underlines the importance of developing practical language skills in vocational training. This finding aligns with the broader understanding of the significance of behavioral engagement in language learning. The observed differences in the relative importance of attitudinal factors compared to previous studies can be attributed to the unique contextual factors of the current study, such as the focus on vocational trainees in Ethiopia. This highlights the need for more context-sensitive research to fully capture the exact interplay between attitudes, context, and language proficiency development.

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