

ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE LEARNING OF ENGLISH IN THE ENGLISH COURSES,  
LEVEL 1 AND 2, FOR UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF  
NARIÑO, SEMESTER A-2009

by

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*Abstract*

This study had the purpose of determining the attitudes that students present towards the learning of English in the courses for undergraduate students at the University of Nariño.

The data was collected thanks to the valuable cooperation of students who were taking the first and the second English level. 40 students were selected at random and were asked with a questionnaire composed of seven open type questions and a Likert scale.

The results indicated that students showed more positive attitudes than negative ones towards the learning of English in these courses. They provided many reasons to justify their attitudes. The main arguments of their favorable attitudes were related to the good teachers' attitude and their training and the main arguments of their unfavorable attitudes were in relation to the lack of resources, the inconformity with the schedules and the lack of more English levels. Besides, the research revealed that students showed their positive attitudes by attending to class, by participating in class, and doing homework as better as possible. On the other hand, the negative attitudes were evidenced not attending to class, not doing homework or doing it with dislike, and not showing interest.

## INTRODUCTION

Attitudes are one of the learner differences that intervene in the English learning process which can be positive and negative. Depending on students' attitudes, learning a second language can become a source of enrichment or a source of dislike. (Lightbown & Spada, 1999).

English is a subject that requires a positive attitude so it can be learned successfully, which is a challenging and complex task for teachers in helping students to acquire a positive attitude to learn a new language.

Attitudes, whose trend is to evaluate an object or fact positively or negatively, should be studied more deeply given that there are different conditions and attitudes for learning a foreign language which have to do with students' performance.

This paper is concerned with the attitudes towards the learning of English in the English courses for undergraduate students who only take the first and the second level at the University of Nariño, and intends to describe this situation. First, the research problem will be presented. Second, a review of the most important related topics to the research problem will be included. Third, the research method used in the paper will be described. Fourth, the analysis of the data and the results will be presented. Finally, some conclusions and recommendations for improving possible negative learning attitudes towards English will be included.

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## CHAPTER I: THE RESEARCH PROBLEM

### *Problem Description*

English Learning involves internal and external factors. Among the internal ones are attitudes which can be positive and negative. This paper is concerned with the attitudes towards the learning of English in English courses for undergraduate students who only take the first and the second level at the University of Nariño. The reason for selecting just the two levels is that students of the majority of careers are only required to take the first and the second level. English for undergraduate students is a course composed generally by 2 levels that students have to take between the first and the sixth semester of their respective career at the University of Nariño.

As in any subject, attitudes in English as a foreign language are a very important area allowing students and teachers to carry out a satisfactory learning-teaching process.

Due to there are several factors that could influence on the learning process in these courses, this research paper is very significant at the University of Nariño, since discovering the students' attitudes towards the English courses for undergraduate students, not only the quality of education would be verified, but also, their possible attitudinal problems could be detected in order to do something to counteract them.

Unless students' attitudes are positive, the negative possible situations require reflection because they might not only affect students, but also teachers, and consequently, the learning-teaching process.



### *Problem Statement*

What are the attitudes towards the learning of English in the English courses, level 1 and 2 for undergraduate students at the University of Nariño?

### *Significance*

How to teach a foreign language and how to learn it are subjects of a constant investigation, and attitudes are an important factor that intervenes in this process. To find out the attitudes towards the learning of English in the English courses for undergraduate students at the University of Nariño is very important because it will allow knowing the factors that interfere in them; and if necessary, it will be possible to create a plan to change them in order to improve the English learning and teaching process.

It is relevant to say that this research is of an institutional importance, since it will contribute to the progress of the University which will benefit from the information about the attitudes in the English learning process. Besides, the information included here will be useful for future research.

It is also important to say that there is no research related to attitudes in the English learning process, at least not in the University of Nariño. So it is considered that this paper would be a first attempt to study students' attitudes towards English Learning in undergraduate English courses.

### *Research Objectives*

#### *General Objective*

To determine the learning attitudes towards the learning of English in the English courses (level 1 and 2) for undergraduate students.

### *Specific Objectives*

1. To identify how learning attitudes towards English are evidenced on the part of students.
2. To recognize the possible causes that promote attitudes towards the learning of English.
3. To determine the influence of attitudes on the English learning process.
4. To find out about the changes that would be necessary to promote positive attitudes towards the learning of English.

### *Delimitation*

#### *Conceptual Delimitation*

*Attitude.* “attitudes have been referred to as ‘learned motivations’, ‘valued beliefs’, ‘evaluations’, ‘what one believes is acceptable’ or ‘responses oriented towards approaching or avoiding’”. Attitudes imply three main characteristics; they always have an object, they are evaluative and they predispose to certain actions” (Wenden, 1991).

The attitudes are the favorable and unfavorable feelings that we develop towards people, objects and facts of our remote or immediate environment (Guillén & Guil, 1999).

*Undergraduate Foreign Language.* English for undergraduate students is a course consisting on two levels which students of the University of Nariño must take between the first and the sixth semester of their respective career (Estatuto Estudiantil de Pregrado, 2006).

*Undergraduate Students.* Undergraduate students are students of the University of Nariño who study a determined career belonging to a certain knowledge area or specialty.

*Foreign Language.* It describes situations where students learn English in order to use it with any other English speakers in the world (Harmer, 2007).

*Second Language.* It describes the language to be used in a Target Language community in order to survive and prosper in that community doing such things as renting apartments, accessing the local health service (Harmer, 2007).

*Motivation.* In second language learning, motivation is a complex phenomenon which can be defined in terms of two factors: learners' communicative needs, and their attitudes towards the second language community (Lightbown & Spada, 1999).

#### *Geographical Delimitation*

The research was developed in the University of Nariño, Panamericana Campus, located to the Northwest of Pasto, in the Acacias Neighborhood. This is a public University. It has a modern infrastructure, 40 classrooms, full time and part-time professional teachers, and 709 students who take the English courses, level 1 and 2.

#### *Limitations*

Some of the most important limitations for this research project were that some students involved in the research showed apathy to answering the questionnaires. They possibly did not answer with the truth. So, the information would not be completely reliable. On the other hand, other students did not accept to cooperate.

The thought that some students have that English is not important for them because they are not going to travel to another country could have a big influence on their motivation and it could have limited their answers.

In spite of the limitations briefly outlined, this research was carried out in the best possible way.

This chapter included the basic aspects to be taken into account for the research. It presented the research problem, its description and significance as well as research objectives.

The conceptual and geographical delimitations of the research were also presented and finally the limitations the researchers found. In the following chapter a literature review will be featured.

## CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

It is important to have a support for the matters involved in the attitudes towards foreign language learning; that is why, in this chapter the researchers intend to get, by means of a framework, the needed information to work on the research problem. It includes some definitions of attitudes, the nature of attitudes and its components, attitudes and behavior, persuasion and its components, cognitive dissonance, attitudes to the teacher and the course materials, attitudes toward the teacher and classroom environment, attitudes toward the self, attitudes toward learners autonomy and learning affected by psychological factors. At the end, some relevant research related to the topic is presented. So, this information will provide an academic foundation for the research and will support the analysis of data.

### *Definitions of Attitudes*

In order to talk about students' attitudes, it is necessary to take into consideration some definitions of attitudes from different sources.

“Attitudes are probably the most fundamental concept in social psychology because they are involved in all social behavior, from political decisions to stereotyping and prejudice” (Allport, 1935; quoted by Westen, 1999). It is a way to predict how people are going to act in different contexts.

“An attitude is an association between an act or object and an evaluation” (Eagly & Chaiken, 1992; Fazio, 1986; quoted by Westen, 1999). Evaluation refers to a negative or positive judgment that people make about others or something.

“An attitude is a tendency to evaluate a person, concept, or group positively or negatively” (Eagly & Chaiken, 1998; quoted by Westen, 1999). Attitudes allow evaluating individuals or concepts with positive or negative judgments.

An attitude is a learned predisposition to respond consistently in a favorable or unfavorable way, regarding to an object or its symbols (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975; Oskamp, 1977; quoted by Hernandez, Fernandez & Baptista, 1991).

### *The Nature of Attitudes*

Social psychologists distinguish three components of an attitude: a cognitive component or belief, an emotional or evaluative component and a behavioral disposition.

#### *Cognitive Components.*

According to Bieri (1966), Suedfeld and Granatstein (1995); quoted by Westen (1999) attitudes are different in their complexity; for example, two people with the same positive attitudes towards a situation or an object may have different levels of complexity in their beliefs.

Researchers have used some methods to try to measure the complexity of people's attitudes (Tetlock, 1989; quoted by Westen, 1999). One of them is to read the discourses and decode them. Researchers have found out that people who are in politic extremes like left and right are less complex regarding their thoughts than people who are independent. In this way, the complex thought produces better judgments; but, it not always leads to correct conclusions (Westen, 1999).

Moreover, attitudes also distinguish themselves in their interconnection with other attitudes (Eagly & Chaiken, 1998; quoted by Westen, 1999). Positive or negative attitudes towards a fact may take with themselves other related attitudes. Attitudes also vary according to the extent they are located in a system of values and ideologies (Feather, 1996; quoted by Westen, 1999).

*Emotional or Evaluative Components.*

The two important evaluative components are: intensity and ambivalence. Some attitudes are related to strong emotional reactions. (Westen, 1999). If an individual has a strong attitude towards something, his emotional reaction is also going to be strong; but if an individual has an indifferent attitude towards something, his reaction is going to be neutral. Another dimension is the extent to which attitudes involve conflictive feelings due to a person could have positive and negative feelings about just one object or situation. So, the attitudinal ambivalence is the association of an attitude towards an object with conflictive evaluative responses which can be positive and negative (Cacioppo, Gardner & Berntson, 1997; Priester & Petty, 1996; quoted by Westen, 1999).

Attitudes which are low in a positive or negative way have a minimum impact on the behavior; on the other hand, attitudes which are high in a positive and negative way can become totally positive; but, it is important to take into account that attitudes are also related to the feelings. Some attitudes which are related to disgust and scorn have people withdrawn of the situation or object, and in those attitudes related to feelings such as fear, anger and jealousy, people can attack others and become conflictive (Smith, 1993; quoted by Westen, 1999).

*Behavioral Disposition*

*Attitude Strength.* "It deals with the durability and the impact of an attitude" (Petty & Krosnick, 1994; quoted by Westen, 1999). An attitude is durable if it persists all the time and does not change. An attitude has an impact if it affects the behavior and influence the way of thinking and feeling (Westen, 1999).

*Attitude Retrieval.* Attitudes, thoughts and memories build in a connected way due to the combination of representations and associations which are in the memory with immediate

perceptions and feelings. So that an attitude can have an impact on the immediate thoughts and behaviors, it must be cognitively accessible. Accessibility refers to “the facility which an attitude activates with” (Fazio, 1990, 1995; quoted by Westen, 1999). Highly accessible attitudes activate quickly and automatically if a fact related to a determined attitude happens. Social psychologists are acknowledging the importance of the difference between explicit attitudes and the implicit ones. The first ones are conscious and the second ones are associations between the attitude towards an object and the feelings towards the same object, which regulates the thought and the behavior in an unconscious and automatic way (Greenwald & Banaji, 1995; quoted by Westen, 1999).

*Coherence.* Attitudinal coherence “the extent to which an attitude is internally consistent” (Eagly & Chaiken, 1998; quoted by Westen, 1999). This means that the cognitive and the emotional aspects that the attitudes contain, should be congruent because an emotional evaluation of an object should reflect a cognitive value of their qualities and generate positive consequences (Westen, 1999). From a cognitive perspective, coherent attitudes whose beliefs about an object or situation are strongly associated with the feelings about the same object or situation have a strong influence on the way people act.

#### *Attitudes and Behavior*

Attitudes should generally predict behavior. According to Fishbein and Ajzen (1974) quoted by Westen (1999), “broad attitudes predict behavior, but not at all”. Several factors may influence the way how people behave. First of all, people’s attitudes predict their actions if the attitude and the actions have the same level of generability and if they are specific (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977; Kraus, 1975, quoted by Westen, 1999). For example, if someone is asked about



his /her attitude towards politics, it does not predict if he or she is going to vote; but, if the same person is asked about his /her attitude towards the vote, this predicts that he or she will vote.

Secondly, it is important to take into account that people's attitudes are only one of the many influences on the shape that attitudes have (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977; quoted by Westen, 1999). From a behaviorist perspective, behavior is controlled by environmental consequences; but, from a cognitive perspective, behavior is controlled by implicit processes or habits, what demonstrates that people have unconscious attitudes that control their behavior (Ouellette & Wood, 1997; quoted by Westen, 1999). On the other hand, it is probable that explicit attitudes predict behavior when there is a conscious reflection on such attitudes. However, human behavior is so complex that it can be said that a single attitude can predict what a person is going to do in a specific situation.

Third, explicit attitudes predict some behavior; but the implicit ones explain the way people act because they are more automatic. Finally, the way attitudes are acquired influences the impact of the attitudes on the behavior (Westen, 1999). According to Fazio and Zanna (1981); Smith and Swinyard (1983); quoted by Westen (1999) "attitudes shaped by personal experiences are especially susceptible to influence action"; it means people who were personally affected in a negative way are likely to act according to their negative attitudes by doing something to change the situation that affected them.

One important aspect in changing attitudes is persuasion consisting on making people change their attitudes.

### *Persuasion*

It refers to the effort and the interest of some people to change the attitudes of others (Westen, 1999). At this point, teachers can use their teaching techniques and their knowledge to persuade students to learn English.

#### *Central and Peripheral Routes*

In some cases, people change their attitudes after having done a conscious reflection; but, in other cases, people's attitudes change with a little of reflection. Petty and Cacioppo (1981, 1986); Eagly and Chaiken (1992); Petty and Wegener (1998); quoted by Westen (1999) have identified two ways in which people can be persuaded. The first one is the central route that refers to make people think carefully and after that they consider their arguments. The second one is the peripheral route that refers to have people's thoughts deviated totally toward another thought without having rational fundamentals.

The elaboration likelihood model of persuasion consists on appealing to people after knowing the likelihood that they will think a lot about the arguments (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986; quoted by Westen). According to this model, the central route to persuade the attitude of people is more effective when they are motivated to think about the topic, they are able to think about it and they also have the time to consider the arguments. However, these appeals are not always successful; people can think about the arguments and find that they are unpersuasive. On the other hand, the peripheral route is more effective when the attitude of people is not strong and it is based on minimal knowledge (Westen, 1999).

The central and peripheral routes to attitude change are related to explicit and implicit judgments and decision making. While the explicit attitude change, that is, the central route, requires a conscious work, the implicit attitude change, that is, the peripheral route can occur in

several ways. One of them is through the classical conditioning. It consists on making people associate something with a positive feeling. This process can occur without having knowledge (Westen, 1999).

Some non-rational appeals may also be persuasive. For example, repeating a message enough times can make people believe it (Arkes et al., 1991; quoted by Westen, 1999). This can happen for several reasons. According to Zajonc (1968, 1998); quoted by Westen (1999) one of them is familiarity because people usually prefer things that are familiar. According to Westen (1999) a second reason is that the fact of repeating a message which relates an attitude object and a feeling strengthens their connection due to mechanisms of association. It works with positive and negative persuasive appeals. Finally, the number of times a person hears a message is very important because people tend to forget the source and only remember the message.

#### *Components of Persuasion*

Several components of persuasion have been identified: the source, the message, the channel (the means by which the message is conveyed), context, and receiver (Laswell, 1948; Mc Guire, 1985, Petty & Wegener, 1998; quoted by Westen, 1999).

*Source.* According to Chaiken (1980), Simons et al. (1970) quoted by Westen (1999) the speaker is more persuasive when he/she appears attractive, credible, expert, trustworthy, powerful, and similar to the receiver.

*Message.* The type of appeal and the way it is conveyed also affect the attitude change (Westen, 1999). Fear appeals induce fear to change attitude. Sometimes they can be effective, but if they induce too much fear, they can backfire, making people stop paying attention to the message and they focus on managing the anxiety caused (Insko et al., 1965; quoted by Westen,

1999). However, fear can help to attitude change if the receivers of the message believe the danger affects them and they can do something to avoid it (Westen, 1999).

*Channel.* It refers to the means by which the message is sent: words or images, verbally or nonverbally, personally or by telephone or television. It is important both to choose the right channel and the right message (Westen, 1999).

*Context.* The context also influences attitude change (Petty & Wegener, 1998; quoted by Westen, 1999). Distraction can also affect the impact of a persuasive appeal. It can prevent people from developing counterarguments or it can reduce the attention paid to the appeal. Many methods to increase resistance to contrary appeals have been devised. One of them is to be the first to make the appeal (Insko, 1964; Miller & Canbell, 1959; quoted by Westen, 1999). Another method is attitude inoculation that consists on building up the resistance to an appeal exposing the person to weak arguments supporting the other point of view, trying the person to develop counterarguments (Mc Guire, 1961; McGuire & Papegeorgis, 1962; quoted by Westen, 1999).

*Receiver.* The characteristics and qualities of the receiver also affect persuasiveness. Some people predispose their information for preserving the attitudes they do not want to change (MacCoun, 1998; quoted by Westen, 1999). People with weaker opinions are easier to persuade. And some people are more resistant to attitude change (Westen, 1999).

*Behavioral Change.* Inducing people first to change their behavior is one of the most effective strategies for changing attitudes. The foot-in-the-door technique is one of these strategies and it is based on the assumption that when people accept a small request, they will probably accept a bigger one later (Beaman et al., 1983; quoted by Westen, 1999).

### *Cognitive Dissonance*

It refers to the discrepancy between an attitude and a behavior or between an attitude and a new piece of information (Westen, 1999). According to Festinger (1957, 1962) quoted by Westen (1999) the discrepancy can establish a psychological tendency similar to anxiety; but the tension also can motivate to change the attitude, the behavior, or the inconsistent information to eliminate the discrepancy and the tension.

### *Attitudes*

What the majority of teachers have experienced is the satisfaction of success and the grief of failure; therefore, the job as a teacher has a series of emotional ups and downs which are considered as normal aspects of teaching. The problem is when the teacher develops an apathetic attitude. Regarding to the students, their attitudes depend on the motivation which generally is extrinsic. This causes that the student's attitude becomes passive, since he/she pretends to approve an English course without studying and learning very much. It is said that the vicious circle of negative attitudes begins here because the teacher start discouraging himself when he/she realizes the results so low of his/her students and when the students observe this situation, they start opposing the course and even the extrinsic motivation disappears. At this point, teachers and students only want to finish the course for blaming each other. However, there are students who want to learn a language because of its possible usefulness or for the pleasure of knowing a new language. Many times, students state that they have devoted a lot of time and they have not learned anything, it means that they feel insecure when they speak and write in English and consequently, they develop a negative attitude (Oviedo, 1980). According to Stevick (1972) quoted by Oviedo (1980) the solution is to incorporate more opportunities for communication in the learning process.

### *The Affective Domain*

#### *Attitude toward Self*

In general, self-esteem leads to self-confidence. Their degrees vary in different situations and tasks, and they may increase as we perform well in a situation. Oller (1981); quoted by Amato (1988) sees the relationship between affect and learning as bidirectional. That is, we perform well when our attitude toward self is positive.

According to Stevick (1976) quoted by Amato (1988) self-security is an important part of the attitude toward self. If the individual feels good with himself and as a social being, this person will probably perform better in the process of acquiring a second language.

#### *Attitudes to the Teacher and Course Materials*

Students have different views about the kind of teacher and the variety of materials that they prefer. Some of them prefer a former teacher and others like a democratic teaching style. Some learners want the teacher to act as an informant; but, others like teachers who are logical, clear and systematic. According to Pickett (1978) quoted by Ellis (1985), learners need to feel sympathy for the teacher who needs to be predictable. Learners also have attitudes towards the materials; for example, adults do not like course books. They prefer a variety of materials to use them in their own way (Ellis, 1985).

#### *Attitudes toward the Teacher and the Classroom Environment*

Sometimes, there are conflicts between students and teachers, and students and peers; therefore, students develop certain attitudes toward the teacher and the classroom environment, which generates unpleasant situations. To ease these situations, teachers use affective activities or humanistic techniques (Moskowitz, 1978; quoted by Amato, 1988) which enhance the attitudes of foreign language students toward learning the target language, toward their

classmates and toward how their peers perceive them. These humanistic techniques also enhance students' self-perceptions and increase the acceptance among them (Amato, 1988).

#### *Attitude toward the Target Language and the People who Speak it*

The attitudes that a person has toward the target language and the target group, especially peers, probably affect motivation. Gardner and Lambert (1972); quoted by Amato (1988) say that these attitudes may determine the success in learning the new language.

Stereotyping plays an important role here. It creates a social barrier that inhibits communication and learning, which also affects the self-image of the people being stereotyped. Negative stereotypes also bring negative reactions and encourage negative attitudes toward the target language and culture (Saville-Troike, 1976; quoted by Amato, 1988).

#### *Attitudes towards Learner Autonomy*

Regarding to attitude change, attitudes refer to learned motivations, valued beliefs, evaluations, what one believes is acceptable or responses oriented towards approaching and avoiding. Attitudes always have an object; they are evaluative and predispose to certain actions (Wenden, 1991).

There are two crucial attitudes to learner autonomy: attitudes about his role in the language learning process and his capability as a learner. Autonomous learners are responsible for their learning; they are self-confident and able to self-direct their learning because they believe in their ability to learn (Wenden, 1991).

#### *Learner Attitudes and Metacognitive Knowledge*

A form of metacognitive knowledge are the central beliefs to language learners' attitudes about autonomy and their beliefs about their role and capability as learners which differ from person, strategic and task knowledge.

Learner beliefs about their role and capability as learners are shaped and kept by other beliefs about themselves. For example, when learners think that they do not have the ability to learn a language or they believe that certain personalities cannot successfully learn a language. On the other hand, evaluations of acceptability and unacceptability are intrinsic to learners' beliefs and predispose them to be willing or unwilling to take on responsibility for their learning. However, "evaluations are not necessarily intrinsic to task and strategic knowledge, nor will this knowledge necessarily predispose to action until and unless experience demonstrates significance" (Wenden, 1991). Evaluations are not always related to learners' beliefs because learners can evaluate themselves according to what they see or feel, and beliefs not always lead to an action.

#### *Factors Influencing Learner Attitudes towards Autonomy*

##### *Socialization Processes*

In some cases, socialization processes lead to a belief of dependence rather than independence in adults (Mezirow, 1985; quoted by Wenden, 1991). According to Knowles (1976) quoted by Wenden (1991), this attitude may be acquired from the school where students find that learning is up to formal institutions and the teacher.

For students, they are consumers of learning and teachers are the source of knowledge and the ones who make the decision about success or failure in examinations (Holec, 1987; quoted by Wenden, 1991).

##### *Conflicting Role Demands*

There are different reasons why people learn a foreign language. For the immigrants it is necessary for daily survival. For some people it is a means to achieve other goal. And for international students it is a requisite for a degree. Due to the fact that the adult learner has many



needs and concerns, learning a foreign language is not usually given to priority. What they are really interested in is the final goal, for example a degree. For them, learning a language is an obstacle; therefore, they think they should spend as little time, energy, and effort as possible. It is also important to say that adult learners do not have enough time to devote to learn a foreign language because they have other roles which conflict with their role as a learner. As a result they do not take a responsible role in their learning (Wenden, 1991).

### *Complexity of Roles*

According to Wright (1987) quoted by Wenden (1991) there are two factors that influence role formation and maintenance. The first ones are the interpersonal factors including status, position, attitudes and beliefs about teaching and learning, personality and motivation. The second ones are the task-related factors including the task goal, the task itself and the topics or subject matter of the task. Both factors can influence the role that learners assume in the classroom and the expectations they hold regarding the teacher's role and their classmates' roles. So, role change is a complex task since it requires changing learners' perceptions about the previous factors and also making learners acquire behaviors appropriate to their new perceptions.

### *Lack of Metacognitive Knowledge*

Ignorance about their mental processes may also contribute to learners' lack of willingness and self-confidence in the learning process. In his studies with college freshmen, Schoenfield (1892) quoted by Wenden (1991) observed that many students were not aware that they were able to change their own cognitive behavior and that they could be actively involved in their own learning process. That means that many students do not believe in their intellectual potential. Those freshmen were native English speakers but Wenden (1991) explains that the same attitude can typify language learners.

### *Learned Helplessness*

It has been shown that failure in learning makes some learners have nonproductive thoughts about their lack of ability. At the same time, it entails inaccurate attribution patterns and expectancies which can cause cognitive performance deteriorate and learners see themselves as incapable of learning (Diener & Dweck, 1978, 1980; quoted by Wenden, 1991). Knowles (1975) quoted by Wenden (1991) explains that these beliefs acquired in childhood are part of the adult's self-concept; therefore, these earlier views will influence their performance in their role as learners. "As a result, many regress to a state of 'learned helplessness', believing themselves incapable of learning without a teacher" (Wenden, 1991).

### *Self-Esteem*

Self-esteem, understood as the evaluation a person makes and holds with regard to himself, is a factor to take into account for understanding how the second-language acquisition process differs among people. According to Brown (1987) quoted by Wenden (1991) three types of self-esteem can be distinguished. The first one is general self-esteem which is relatively stable in a mature adult. The second one is situational self-esteem and it refers to how people evaluate themselves in specific situations, such as school or work, or regarding specific abilities. The third one is task self-esteem that refers to particular tasks within specific situations and it varies depending on the task. Research shows that self-esteem is an important variable in second language acquisition (Gardner & Lambert, 1972; Brodkey & Shore, 1976; Hayde, 1979; as cited in Brown (n.d.); quoted by Wenden, 1991). A lack of self-esteem could contribute learners form negative attitudes towards their capability to learn in an autonomous way (Wenden, 1991).

*Learning is affected by Complex Psychological Factors*

Intelligence and aptitude have been considered the most important reasons why some people are more successful when learning a second language. And actually some people seem to be better at language learning than others. However, Gardner and Lambert (1972); quoted by Littlewood (1996) showed that attitudes and motivation are equally important. Moreover, research and experience have shown that other psychological factors can influence the course of learning.

Littlewood (1996) shows five points as examples of how teaching may be affected by psychological factors. First, language learning is a natural response to communicative needs which can be productive or receptive and teachers must help learners realize the communicative value of the language. They can do it by making learners relate the language to the social contexts in which it is spoken, by creating communicative contexts in the classroom, by helping learners express their personal needs and when possible by establishing contact with native speakers. Second, learning usually occurs more easily when there are positive attitudes towards the second language community. So, prejudices towards the second language community must be broken down, a learner must realize the common interests with its members. Suitable teaching materials and personal contact with native speakers help to do it. Third, due to the fact that the first visit to the foreign country creates a sense of inadequacy and anxiety, called culture shock, teachers must prepare students for this situation. They can help them with knowledge and coping strategies for daily situations. Fourth, anxiety can impede learning and make learners fear to express in the foreign language. For that reason, teachers must try to create a comfortable classroom atmosphere, give each learner opportunities to express, and they must avoid being

over-critical of their performance. And finally, teachers can encourage learners to adopt the strategies of the students who are more successful at learning the foreign language.

Attitudes towards the learning of English also depend on the purposes that students have with it.

### *English for Specific Purposes*

In English for specific purposes the teaching and materials are based on the results of students' needs analysis. Their needs are defined by a learning or occupational situation in which English plays a main role. It is usually divided up into two categories; English for Occupational Purposes (EOP), which relates to professional such as business, engineering, etc, and English for Academic Purposes (EAP), which happens in educational contexts such as the university or similar institutions and even the school for advanced, intermediate students or beginners.

Some characteristics of ESP are variable (ESP may be designed for specific disciplines, it may use a different methodology from that of the general English, it is designed for adults or students at a secondary school level at a tertiary level institution or in a professional work situation; intermediate, advanced or beginners), but others are consistent (ESP is designed to meet the learners' specific needs, it makes use of the underlying methodology and activities to teach a certain discipline, it is centered on the language, skills, discourse and genres appropriate to these activities) (Dudley, 2002; quoted by Richards & Renandya, 2006).

### *English for Academic Purposes*

“English for academic purposes (EAP) is not only a teaching approach. It is also a branch of applied linguistics consisting of a significant body of research into effective teaching and assessment approaches, methods of analysis of the academic texts, and analysis of the textual practices of academics” (Hamp-Lyons, 2002; quoted by Richards & Renandya, 2006).

EAP provides an academic context of subject matter that is specific and relevant to satisfy learner's needs but it is also general to be used across a wide range of context and satisfy some of the general educational and social aims. On the other hand, on an EAP approach, needs analysis is fundamental to course design and teaching. Needs analysis allows setting the objectives, assessing the available resources and constraints to be borne in mind and design the syllabus and methodology.

Besides, EAP is divided into different fields: academic writing that is the largest field, academic listening, academic reading, and academic speaking that has been mainly ignored.

A main activity of specialists in EAP is materials design and development. In-house materials have a great strength that is that they respond directly to the local needs. In contrast, published materials are general (Hamp-Lyons, 2002; quoted by Richards & Renandya, 2006).

#### *Related Research*

After consulting some research related to learning attitudes towards English learning in the courses for ungraduate students at the University of Nariño: the following studies were found: "Teachers and students' attitudes towards children with a low scholar performance in the fifth grade of elementary school of San Juan Bosco Institute (Cordoba & Narvaez, 2004) and "Teachers' attitudes towards children who have Hyperactivity and Attention Deficit Disorder (HADD)" (Cando, 2004).

The first research was elaborated in 2004, by Deivis Del Carmen Córdoba Meza and Nury Hayden Narvaez Revelo, students of the University of Nariño; the main objective of this research was to interpret the attitudes of teachers and students towards the children with a low scholar performance in the fifth grade of elementary school in San Juan Bosco Institute. It is a quantitative research and it is descriptive because it consists on making an approximation to the

social situations to explore them , describe them , and understand them in an integral way; that is, based on what the people involved in the study knew, and not on hypotheses. It means that the individuals interacted with the other people in their social context, sharing the meaning and knowledge that they had about themselves and about reality. Besides “it tried to show the properties or aspects that characterize a group of people” (Paredes, 2000; quoted by Cordoba & Narvaez, 2004). This research was carried out with key students (four students of each grade, four students with high and intermediate performance and three students with a low scholar performance), distributed in four of the seven grades of fifth grade and with the teachers in charge of these courses. The following instruments were used to collect the data: a deep interview, a semi-structured interview, a questionnaire and observation. Then, the data were classified into categories and subcategories of analysis and after that they were interpreted. It was found that the attitude of the students towards their classmates with a low performance changed according to the context in which they were and according to whom it was addressed. On the other hand, the attitude of the teachers consisted on giving solutions based only on scholar performance, conducts of exclusion and inadequate callings for attention. The attitudes mentioned caused deficient interpersonal relationships, inadequate self esteem and pessimistic expectations towards children with a low scholar performance.

The second research was carried out in 2004, by Daliz Victoria Cando Folleco, student of a post-graduate program in the Mariana University. The main objective of this research was to understand the attitudes of the teachers towards children with Hyperactivity and Attention Deficit Disorder. This research was qualitative, since HADD is a social phenomenon present in the educational environment. It required a description of the attitudes of the teachers towards children with that disorder and an interpretation of those attitudes. This study was hermeneutic-

historical since it was important to give sense and to create something new based on the experience in order to clarify the interest of the research. It was also ethnographic because the researcher, the teacher and the students spent a lot of time together in the classroom. This research was carried out with the teachers of San Felipe Nery High school from Pasto who were in charge of children with HADD.

To collect the information, the following instruments were used: an informal interview, observation and a workshop with the group of teachers to do a focal interview. These three strategies had the purpose of allowing the researcher to obtain all the necessary information to determine the beliefs, the behaviors and the affective manifestations that educators of San Felipe Nery High School, who are in charge of those children present. These beliefs, behaviors and affective manifestations are categories from which an oriented question was made. It was found that teachers had information about the HADD and some beliefs which emerged when managing groups with students with the disorder. This disorder has neurological roots. The child shows clear characteristics like the difficulty to pay attention and concentrate, hyperactivity and in some cases, aggression. Certain teachers' beliefs such as: "this disorder is caused from the pregnancy, which makes the child to have a slow learning with behaviors that catch the attention because in some cases those are against the rules ", made the teachers have some responses inside and outside the classroom, and they reinforced their ideas because everything was commented during their free time or in meetings organized by the institution. Besides, teachers added this problem is produced by the lack of support from parents toward their children; therefore, teachers stayed with these children more time. On the other hand, the indiscipline of the whole class stood out more this disorder, and consequently, it was observed the non-verbal expression with anger and annoyance from teachers was present when they were not able to solve this discipline problem.

At this point, teachers were not ready for the integration. Also, it was found that teachers were confused and disoriented because there were some subjects like computer science which were new for elementary school children and for the special ones. For other teachers, this was the opportunity to progress. The previous points showed that teachers' attitudes were varied and these attitudes were varied according to thoughts and beliefs which were known in the interaction inside the classroom. Teaching in an integrated class requires personal and professional dedication; it is not sufficient that the directives support the integration of children with special needs. The success or the failure of the process depends on the teachers' attitudes and practices in the classroom. In fact, the main indicator that characterizes an integration process with a possibility of success is the extent of persuasion that the teacher demonstrates toward how to manage the cases and his/her attitude toward them.

This chapter was related to the literature review which included general and specific topics about attitudes in foreign language learning. It was presented in order to have a clearer understanding about the topic and it also presented two research papers related to the topic. The following chapter will present the information about the methodology used for the research including the population and the sample, the data collection procedures, the pilot study, validity and reliability.



### CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

Chapter two was related to the literature review which included contents such as: some definitions of attitudes, the nature of attitudes and its components, its relation to the behavior, the way these attitudes change and can be persuaded, and the attitudes towards certain aspects, among others. This chapter shows the research design, a description of some aspects involved in the research, such as the population, the sample, and the data collection procedures. Finally, the pilot study is considered to prove the validity of the data collection instrument.

#### *The Research Design*

This research paper is a descriptive one, and its characteristics lead us to quantitative results. This paper has a quantitative approach because the topic to deal with and its objectives are concretely defined and the study is supported by questionnaires which are a typical instrument of the quantitative research. After describing the situation, the problem was analyzed to create a closer idea about the way in which the variables are present in this context. Subjectivity in the analysis of the information collected was avoided.

The quantitative - descriptive design was selected because it permits to collect the information and analyze the data in a more objective and systematic way. Besides, this paradigm offers a low risk of founding out ambiguities and possible frustrations.

#### *Population*

The population used in this study corresponds to the undergraduate students, men and women who take the English courses, level 1 and 2 at the University of Nariño, whose ages range between 16 and 35. Besides, their social status is variable and their proficiency in English is beginners. These students are in different semesters, from first to sixth.

### *Sample*

A part of the population, that is, 40 students who take the English courses, level 1 and 2 at the University of Nariño, was selected. This sample was chosen at random and was representative of the whole population, that is, it had the same characteristics of the population.

### *Data Collection Procedures*

For this research paper, the required information was collected in a quantitative way through a questionnaire which was applied to 40 students enrolled in the first and second English level at the University of Nariño during the course of the project development. The questions were designed for students to provide the necessary information so that researchers are sure that the data is exhaustive and reflect the purpose of the research. The data collected was organized and classified, so that it could easily be analyzed.

The data collection technique or instrument; it means, the questionnaire contained open type of questions and a Likert scale which asked individuals to respond to a series of statements by indicating whether they “strongly agree” (SA), “agree” (A), “disagree”(D), and “strongly disagree”(SD) with each statement. “Strongly agree” was assigned a weight of 4 points, while “strongly disagree” got a score of 1. Due to the same questionnaire was given to all subjects at exactly the same time; the data was more uniform, standard and accurate.

### *Pilot Study*

In order to get more validity of the data collection techniques, and an approximation about the possible outcomes or problems in the development of the research, the pilot study was taken into consideration. It consisted of applying a questionnaire to 10 people involved in this research to see if it had validity or not, also to realize if students understand the questions and the statements and if they had a positive attitude towards this instrument.

The sample taken in the pilot study was 10 undergraduate students who took the English courses, level 1 and 2 at the University of Nariño; men and women whose ages were between 16 and 35, their social status was variable and their proficiency in English was beginners. This sample was chosen at random, and based on this pilot study, posterior adjustments were made.

Taking into consideration the questionnaire applied in the pilot study, it was found that few students did not understand the directions of the scales; therefore, it was necessary to change these directions and try to make them clearer. Besides, it was important to add other questions to obtain information about the students' actions that show the learning attitudes towards English, and so reach the objectives.

#### *Validity and Reliability*

The instruments of data collection were created attempting to make them as reliable and valid as possible. The total validity of the instruments was confirmed by the necessary results obtained to reach the objectives. The reliability was maintained by determining carefully the instruments of measurement and by adapting them to our context and subjects; it means taking into account the aspects of the people and the situation in which the research took place, so contradictory results would be avoided.

This chapter was related to the research design, whose research paradigm is quantitative and descriptive. A brief description of the population and the sample was made and the procedures to follow, as well as the pilot study were described to do adjustments in the data collection instruments.

## CHAPTER IV: DATA ANALYSIS

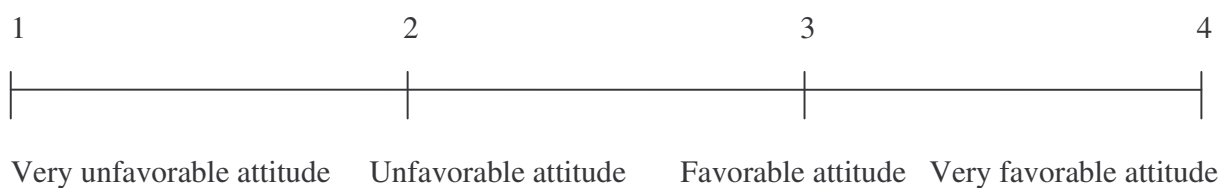
As it is known, the data analysis is a process in which the information or collected data are organized, structured and given a meaning (Marshal and Russman, 1995). In this chapter, the information is categorized taking as a basis the written questionnaire applied and the most common answers students provided, their opinions and replies about the attitudes they present towards English, their behavior related to these attitudes, some possible changes in these courses and some possible causes in order to improve the teaching and learning, and consequently their attitudes. The questionnaires were applied almost at the end of the semester in order to get more valid results; since students had already acquired more experience in these English courses. Besides, the analysis was divided in two parts: level 1 and level 2.

It is important to highlight that the questionnaire consisted of one Likert scale and seven open questions written in Spanish; therefore students replied by writing more than one point of view. In order to present a detailed analysis of the information, each of the questions asked to students, included the Likert scale are presented next. The answers provided by them are described and a short analysis is included in every question.

### *Analysis*

In order to analyze the Likert scale in each level, each answer option was assigned a score from 1 to 4: 1 means strongly disagree, 2 represents disagree, 3 means agree, and 4 means strongly agree (See figure 1).

**Figure 1**



First of all, the scores obtained from all the students regarding each item were summarized, after that, the total score was divided into the number of students (20 of each English level) in order to obtain the total average regarding each item.

Besides, the scores of each student regarding each item were summarized, after, the total score of each student was divided into 4, that is the number of items in order to get the average of each student, then, the averages of all the students were summarized, and finally divided into the number of students to obtain the average of the group regarding to all the items, it means the learning of English in the courses for Undergraduate students.

The statement of the scale was: “what I like the most about the English class is”

The answers students gave were:

*Level 1*

**Table 1**

	<b>Materials</b>	<b>Way of Teaching</b>	<b>Classroom Environment</b>	<b>Schedule</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Average</b>
Student N° 1	4	4	4	2	14	3,5
Student N° 2	3	4	3	3	13	3,25
Student N° 3	3	4	3	2	12	3
Student N° 4	3	4	3	4	14	3,5
Student N° 5	1	1	1	4	7	1,75
Student N° 6	2	3	3	3	11	2,75
Student N° 7	2	3	3	3	11	2,75
Student N° 8	3	2	3	3	11	2,75
Student N° 9	2	3	3	2	10	2,5

Student N° 10	2	3	3	2	10	2,5
Student N° 11	3	4	4	3	14	3,5
Student N° 12	3	3	3	3	12	3
Student N° 13	4	3	2	3	12	3
Student N° 14	3	4	3	4	14	3,5
Student N° 15	4	4	3	2	13	3,25
Student N° 16	3	4	3	2	12	3
Student N° 17	3	3	2	3	11	2,75
Student N° 18	4	4	4	4	16	4
Student N° 19	4	4	4	4	16	4
Student N° 20	4	3	4	2	13	3,25
<b>Total</b>	60	67	61	58	246	61,5
<b>Average</b>	3	3,35	3,05	2,9	12,3	3,075

Analyzing Table 1, it is observed that in regards towards the materials students had a favorable attitude because they got an average of 3 in the scale. Concerning the way of teaching, students had a more favorable attitude (3, 35). About the classroom environment, they also had a favorable attitude (3, 05), and on the topic of schedules, students had an almost favorable attitude (2, 9).

*Level 2***Table 2**

	<b>Materials</b>	<b>Way of Teaching</b>	<b>Classroom Environment</b>	<b>Schedule</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Average</b>
Student N° 1	3	3	2	4	12	3
Student N° 2	3	4	3	4	14	3,5
Student N° 3	4	4	4	4	16	4
Student N° 4	4	4	4	4	16	4
Student N° 5	4	4	4	4	16	4
Student N° 6	4	4	4	4	16	4
Student N° 7	3	4	3	3	13	3,25
Student N° 8	3	3	3	3	12	3
Student N° 9	3	3	3	3	12	3
Student N° 10	3	3	3	3	12	3
Student N° 11	3	3	3	3	12	3
Student N° 12	3	3	3	3	12	3
Student N° 13	3	3	3	3	12	3
Student N° 14	3	3	4	3	13	3,25
Student N° 15	3	2	4	3	12	3
Student N° 16	1	1	2	2	6	1,5
Student N° 17	3	3	3	2	11	2,75
Student N° 18	3	3	3	2	11	2,75

Student N° 19	2	2	1	1	6	1,5
Student N° 20	2	3	3	1	9	2,25
<b>Total</b>	60	62	62	59	243	60,75
<b>Average</b>	3	3,1	3,1	2,95	12,15	3,0375

As shown in Table 2, in the second level, students had a favorable attitude regarding the materials (3). On the subject about the way of teaching, they had a favorable attitude (3, 1). As regards to the classroom environment, students also had a favorable attitude (3, 1), and concerning the schedule, students had an almost favorable attitude (2, 95).

Comparing the results of both levels, it was found that students had a favorable attitude towards the materials. The main material used in these English courses is the coursebook and the additional materials such as the CDs and the workbook are used to reinforce learning. Students probably liked these materials and other ones which the teacher may have used in class. It is important to keep in mind that materials have some basic principles. As Crawford (2002) quoted by Richards and Renandya (2006) states, materials must contextualize the language they present, they need to be authentic, they must be flexible, designed to develop skills and strategies which can be transferred to other texts and contexts, and designed according to the needs, goals, learning styles and level of the learners.

The way of teaching is a more complex topic in the learning and teaching process because it involves the techniques, teacher's training, creativity, and classroom practices. Taking into consideration the results of the scale, students from both levels had a favorable attitude towards the way of teaching.



In relation to classroom environment, students from both levels showed a favorable attitude, so it is possible to think that the atmosphere in the classroom is adequate. Dörnyei (2001) states that student involvement will be highest in a psychologically safe classroom environment in which students are encouraged to communicate their opinions, and in which they feel that they are protected from ridicule and embarrassment.

Concerning the schedule, students revealed that their attitude was unfavorable, but as the scale shows, the students' attitude towards the schedule was almost favorable. This shows a certain unconformity in spite of the great variety of schedules offered by the University. On the other hand, it is also possible that other students' responsibilities do not allow them to attend to classes every day.

In general, this question type Likert scale showed that students had a favorable attitude toward the learning of English in the courses offered by the University of Nariño.

The first open question asked about how students felt when attending to their English classes. As the general objective stated in this descriptive study is to determine the attitudes towards the learning of English in the English courses (level 1 and 2) for undergraduate students, their answers revealed that the majority of students from level 1 felt good because of the quality of people, the environment, and the entertainment that leaning English represented, but some of them added that there should be more activities in class, that it was boring to translate and just follow a coursebook, the fact that they had to study other subject matters English became difficult, that it was uncomfortable when other classmates advanced more than them, that the classes were sometimes monotonous and there were few materials. Other students claimed that they felt very good because they were very encouraged, the classes were comfortable, English was important and it was useful to have different points of view about the world. On the other

hand, other two participants did not feel very good because there were some classmates who advanced a lot and the teacher proceeded at their own pace, and the other added that in spite of this, he/she learned a little about the contents of the book (See table 3).

*Table 3*

<b>How students feel in class</b>	<b>Number of students</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Good	8	40
Good, but with some suggestions	5	25
Very good	5	25
Not very good	2	10

### *Level 2*

In this question, almost half the students answered that they felt good. The reasons were: they were learning new things, they liked English, English was different to the other classes, they did not find any problem, and they were encouraged to learn English. It is important to highlight that one student affirmed that he/she felt good, but there were some anxious moments when presenting oral and written exams. Another group of students claimed that they felt very good because they felt very comfortable with the teacher, and because they went to the University to learn new things. Other students said that they felt normal because they were just learning. One more student claimed that he/she felt excellent, another participant sometimes felt discouraged, one more felt bad when he/she did not master the topic, and one last participant felt lazy because English was an unpleasant subject. (See table 4)

*Table 4*

<b>How students feel in class</b>	<b>Number of students</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Good	9	45
Good, but with one impediment	1	5
Very good	4	20
Normal	2	10
Excellent	1	5
Lazy	1	5
Discouraged	1	5
Bad	1	5

Taking into consideration the previous results, it can be argued that most students felt good in their English classes. Regarding the students from the first level, 65% felt good, but 25% of them added some suggestions. 25% felt very good, and 10% did not feel so good. As regards to the second level, 50% felt good, but 5% of them presented one impediment. 20% felt very good, 10% felt normal, 5% felt excellent, 5% felt lazy, 5% felt discouraged, and another 5% felt bad. In fact, the majority of students from both levels (87, 5%) felt good because they were learning new things and the characteristics of the classroom environment were kind, but from this percentage 17, 14% added some difficulties. Finally, 12, 5% of students manifested negative feelings. About this, Lightbown and Spada (1999) state that where the atmosphere is supportive and non-threatening, teachers can make a positive contribution to students' motivation to learn. From this statement, it can be said that when the learning conditions are good, students feel

good. It is important to note that those students who manifested negative feelings, felt in this way in some occasions; for instance, when the topic to be taught was not well understood. Any practicing teacher will be aware of the fact of the student anxiety created by a tense classroom climate is one of the most strong factors that undermine learning effectiveness and L2 motivation (MacIntyre, 1999; Young, 1999; quoted by Dörnyei, 2001).

The second open question was: “how do you show your like or indifference towards English in the classroom?”

In this question students had the opportunity to say how they showed their like or indifference towards English. The most common answers students from level 1 gave, regarding the like towards English were: by participating in class, by attending to classes. Other students gave other answers such as: by paying attention, by doing workshops and homework as well as possible, by studying for the exams, by presenting doubts, by practicing what was learned.

The following answers are less representative than the previous ones: by learning the bases of English, by interpreting and translating texts, by performing well, by following directions, by showing interest, by showing a good academic level, by being punctual and delivering workshops at time, and by devoting time to the subject matter.

On the other hand, only three students showed indifference towards English, not attending class, not showing interest and being anxious for ending class, not participating in class. (See table 5)

*Table 5*

<b>Actions that made evident the students' like or indifference towards English</b>	<b>Number of students</b>	<b>*Percentage (%)</b>
By participating in class	9	45
By attending class	7	35
By paying attention	3	15
By doing workshops and homework as well as possible	3	15
By studying for the exams	2	10
By presenting doubts	2	10
By practicing what was learned	2	10
By learning the basis of English	1	5
By interpreting and translating texts	1	5
By performing well	1	5
By following directions	1	5
By showing interest	1	5
By showing a good academic level	1	5
By being punctual and delivering workshops at time	1	5
By devoting time to the subject matter	1	5

Not attending to class	1	5
Not showing interest and being anxious for ending class	1	5
Not participating in class.	1	5

\* Students suggested that they showed more than one action expressing their like or indifference in their answers. That is why the percentages do not add up to 100%.

### *Level 2*

In this question, students answered that they showed their like: by paying attention, by attending classes, by participating in class, by doing the activities the best way as possible, by studying. Other independent answers were: by looking for new vocabulary, by answering adequately, by showing interest in the topics, by showing a good attitude, by getting good results, by practicing frequently, by learning something else about the language, by devoting time to the subject matter, by translating texts, listening to music and watching movies.

However, other students showed their indifference towards English. Two students answered that they showed their indifference in this way: by attending class as something compulsory. Other singular answers were: by doing the different activities in class with dislike, by talking with the teacher about the negative aspects of the class, not delivering workshops and showing laziness.

(See table 6)

*Table 6*

<b>Actions that made evident the students' like or indifference towards English</b>	<b>Number of students</b>	<b>*Percentage (%)</b>
By paying attention	5	25
By attending classes	4	20
By participating in class	4	20
By doing activities as better as possible	4	20
By studying	2	10
By looking for new vocabulary	1	5
By answering adequately	1	5
By showing interest in the topics	1	5
By showing a good attitude	1	5
By getting good results	1	5
By practicing frequently	1	5
By learning something else about the language	1	5
By devoting time to the subject matter	1	5
By devoting time to the subject matter	1	5

By translating texts, listening to music and watching movies	1	5
By attending class as something compulsory	2	10
By doing the different activities in class showing dislike	1	5
By dialoguing with the teacher about the negative aspects of the class	1	5
Not delivering workshops and showing laziness	1	5

\* Students suggested that they showed more than one action expressing their like or indifference in their answers. That is why the percentages do not add up to 100%.

As it can be seen, most students from both levels liked English; that is 85% of the students of the first level, and 75% of the students of the second level. It means that only 15% of the students of the first level and 25% of the students of the second level showed indifference. In general, 80 % of students from both levels liked English, and 20 % of them showed indifference. This question refers to the first specific objective: how these attitudes are made evident on the part of language students. An attitude has an impact if it affects the behavior and influence the way of thinking and feeling (Westen, 1999). In this way, it is probable that a good attitude brings about a good action; on the contrary, a negative attitude brings about a negative action. For instance, in this case, the majority of students apparently had a positive attitude and they showed their like towards English by behaving in accordance with their attitude; by participating in class, by attending class, by paying attention, by doing workshops and activities the best way as possible, by studying for the exams and by practicing what was learned. The same happened to



students who showed negative actions; they apparently had a negative attitude and consequently they behaved in a negative way by attending classes as something compulsory, not attending class and not delivering homework. In fact, depending on the learner's attitudes, learning a second language can be a source of enrichment or a source of resentment (Lightbown and Spada, 1999).

The third open question asked about the attitude of the teacher in the classroom. Taking into consideration that the second specific objective of this study is to recognize the possible causes that promote attitudes towards the learning of English, the following analysis was done:

For the level 1, answers were very varied; the majority of students affirmed that the teacher showed a positive attitude in the classroom. The most common answer given by the students was: very good; they gave many reasons such as: the teacher explains well, clarifies doubts, corrects mistakes, performs well, the teacher is efficient and dynamic, facilitating the English learning.

Another favorable answer provided by other participants was: good since the teacher was pleasing, patient, helper, he/she found different ways to teach, facilitates the guides. Other answers were: teacher's attitude was positive and pleasant; adequate and very professional, which makes students appreciate the language.

Many students provided many other answers which are transcribed literally and may contain some mistakes, these are:

- Excellent, the teacher tries to teach the language in several ways.
- The teacher is respectful, punctual, organized and delivers the grades at time.
- The teacher's attitude is in accordance as a teacher, he/ she treats students in a fair and respectful way, he/she is joyful, arousing interest.

- The teacher is kind, sociable and very sure, inculcating security in what is learned and facilitating a good communication.
- The teacher is attentive, and always predisposed to teach.
- The teacher is kind and comprehensive.

Only two students provided a negative point of view about the teacher's attitude. One student said that the teacher did not instruct in a very pleasant way, and finally, the other student claimed that the teacher was very strict regarding the schedules, but dynamic. (See table 7)

*Table 7*

<b>Teacher's Attitude</b>	<b>Number of students</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Very good	5	25
Good	3	15
Positive and pleasant	2	10
Adequate and very professional	2	10
Other positive answers	6	30
Other negative answers	2	10

### *Level 2*

In this question, many students answered that the teacher's attitude was good. They provided many reasons to justify their answers, these were: the teacher was kind, creative, respectful, clear in his/ her explanations, responsible, had a good disposition to teach. Other participants said that the teacher's attitude was very good and they also argued their answers saying that the teacher taught very well and he/she had a respectful attitude as well as a good

disposition with them. Some others claimed that the teacher's attitude was excellent without any reason, and others said that the teacher always had a good disposition to teach. Other independent opinions were: the teacher was very outgoing and very devoted to students, the teacher was kind and always shared his/her knowledge, and the teacher was a good person and was always willing to teach.

In spite of the previous favorable answers, there were students who provide some negative opinions. Students claimed that the teacher's attitude was very variable because his/her temperament was also variable and opinions on the part of students were not permitted. Another participant answered that the teacher was unkind, incomprehensive and had superiority attitudes. One more student said that the teacher was unpleasant, and finally another student answered that the teacher did not show interest to share knowledge. (See table 8)

**Table 8**

<b>Teacher's Attitude</b>	<b>Number of students</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Good	5	25
Very good	3	15
Excellent	2	10
The teacher always has a good disposition to teach	2	10
Other positive answers	3	15
Variable	2	10
Other negative answers	3	15

It was observed that 90% of students of level 1 and 75% of students of level 2 manifested that teacher's attitude was positive. Generally, 82, 5 % of students considered the teacher's attitude as positive, and the rest of students, it means 17, 5 % considered the teacher's attitude as negative. It can be supposed that students have good perceptions and opinions about the teacher as well as teachers have appropriate behaviors and good relationships with them. As Dörnyei (2001) states, teachers have an important role in socializing and shaping motivation of their students through their personal characteristics, verbal or non-verbal behavior and classroom management practices. Many aspects such as the teacher's behaviors, the way of dressing, the stance adopted and the attitude towards the class make an immediate impression on students (Harmer, 2007).

Taking into consideration the objective related to this question, it is important to highlight the many causes that students named in order to justify the good attitude of the teacher. According to them, the teacher had a good attitude because he/she was well prepared, the teacher explained well, clarified doubts, corrected mistakes, the teacher was efficient and dynamic, facilitating English learning, the teacher was pleasing, patient, helper, he/she found different ways to teach, facilitated the guides, the teacher had a good disposition. On the other hand, some causes that students provided to justify their negative perception about the teacher's attitude were that the way of teaching was unpleasant, the teacher had a variable temperament, the teacher was unkind and incomprehensive, the teacher did not show interest to share knowledge. In addition, it can be inferred that the teachers' attitude is a notable cause which makes students have a good attitude towards the learning of English.

The fourth open question related to the same objective asked about the impediments or good aims that students found to learn English in these English courses. Taking into account the

answers that students from level 1 provided in the questionnaire, it can be highlighted that they had more impediments than good aims. Many students stated that they did not find any impediment or good aim, and some of them claimed that everything depended on student's attitude and teacher's methodology. Besides, two students said that the classrooms were very comfortable, and others provided varied answers, these were:

- The teacher clarifies doubts and assigns homework to reinforce the knowledge.
- A lot of vocabulary is learned.
- The topics are appropriate, arousing interest.
- Previous knowledge learned at school is reinforced.
- The schedule adjusts to the needs.
- The education quality is very good.

On the other hand, some students manifested many impediments answering that the time of instruction was not sufficient. Others mentioned the lack of resources at the University. Other participants said that there was not enough time because they had to take other subject matters. It is also important to add other points of view from the rest of the students: one student said that the pronunciation was an impediment; a different student claimed that the class was only based on the coursebook and its recordings, one more participant stated that they had to make many copies and the economical situation was not very good, another learner answered that English was a compulsory subject and not a subject matter they took because they like, and the last one said that the classes should be more creative and practical.

From these results, it can be said that 20% of the surveyed students did have neither impediments nor good aims to learn English in these courses, 40% of students mentioned many good aims, and 65% had some impediments to learn English in this courses. In this question,

students provided more than one point of view, and in some cases they mentioned one impediment and one good claim; that's why the percentages do not add up to 100%.

### *Level 2*

Taking into account the same question, students from this level mentioned more impediments than good aims. The majority of students answered that there was not enough time to devote to English, another group of students claimed that there were not sufficient resources such as laboratories, others said that the nocturnal schedule was bad due to the lack of transportation, other students answered that all the students did not have the same proficiency English level, other participants added that sometimes it was impossible to attend classes because there was not a lot of time. Other answers given by other students regarding the impediments were: the teacher does not attend classes, there are not sufficient bases of the first level, there are not bases of the school and this courses are more advanced, there are more important subjects that require more time, the material used is not appropriate for the career that each one studies.

As regard to good aims, some students provided some independent views. Three of them provided answers related to the teacher. One said that the teacher instructed in a very easy way, another claimed that the teacher was didactic, and one more participant added that the teacher was good. Two students stated that they did not find any impediment in the English courses. Other answers were: students have the facility to take the courses at any semester, the English courses provide the opportunity to meet other people and know another culture, and the infrastructure of the classrooms is good.

From these results, it can be said that 80%, it means a very significant number of students had impediments to learn English in these courses, 30% of students mentioned some good aims, and only 10% of the surveyed students did not have any impediment or good aim in these

courses. In this question, students provided more than one point of view and in some cases mentioned one impediment and one good aim; that's why the percentages do not add up to 100%.

In this question, students from level 1 as well as students from level 2 mentioned more impediments than good aims. Regarding the impediments, many students from both levels had the same problem, which was the lack of resources such as the laboratory. The main impediment of students from level 1 was that the time of instruction was not sufficient, and the major impediment of students from level 2 was that there was not enough time to devote to English.

In the English teaching and learning field, there is a wide range of materials such as videos, CDs, coursebooks, magazines, novels, computers and internet, newspapers, laboratories, etc, which can be used in order to improve students' learning experience; and depending on the materials' quality students can shape or modify their attitudes towards English learning. Nevertheless, students do not always have access to some materials such as the laboratory. In this case, the University of Nariño only has two English laboratories which are used by students of English and French and English and Spanish programs. Besides, classroom materials will usually seek to include an audio visual component, not only because we live in a world which advances in technology, but also because such materials can create a learning environment that is rich in linguistic and cultural information about the target language. Materials such as videos and multimedia allow teacher and learners to explore the non-verbal and cultural aspects of language as well as the verbal. Intonation, gesture, mime, facial expression, body posture, etc, are essential channels of communication which not only help learners understand the verbal language to which they are exposed, but also are an integral part of the system of meaning which they are seeking to learn (Crawford, 2002; quoted by Richards & Renandya, 2006). On the other hand, it

is known that in these courses students require a coursebook; but this is not the only material to teach and learn English. Although, some proponents of the coursebook consider that it helps to achieve consistency and continuation, it gives learners a sense of system, cohesion and progress, and helps teachers prepare and the learners revise (Tomlinson, 2001; quoted by Richards & Renandya, 2006).

Taking into account the time of instruction, it was found that some students considered that time of instruction was not sufficient, but others stated that there was not time to devote to English learning. According to the students' statute of the University of Nariño(2006), the objective of these courses is to facilitate students the basic elements of the foreign language in its four abilities: listening, speaking, reading and writing; that's why, it is considered that the time of instruction established for the English courses (6 hours per week) is adequate.

Another aspect criticized by students of the second level was the schedules, since the nocturnal ones and the other students' obligations made these schedules look as an impediment. Nevertheless, at the university there is a wide range of schedules to facilitate the access to the English courses. Considering that some students manifested that they did not have bases of both the first level and the school, and another said that he/she did not have the same proficiency level, Brown (2001) states that there are often classes composed of students from different levels who should not be placed at the same level. Most of the time, the phenomenon of combining students' competences in the class is determined by institutional placement procedures, so there is little the teacher can do to kick out students to either extreme.

From this previous analysis it can be inferred that these impediments could be some causes of the students' negative attitudes towards the learning of English.



The second part of this question talked about what good aims students found to learn English in these courses. Students from both levels mentioned the good infrastructure of the classrooms and some points of view related to the teacher. As Brown (2001) says, the classroom must have a good sight, comfort and must be free of external sounds to make it comfortable. On the other hand, when the teacher is didactic, clarifies doubts, gives additional homework when necessary, and teaches in an understandable way as students claimed in their answers, the teacher is contributing actively to generating positive student's attitudes towards learning the subject matter even if motivational conditions are in place (Dörnyei, 2001). Among other advantages, other students saw that the schedules were adequate and that the courses could be taken in any semester. In addition, it can be inferred that these good aims could be some causes of the students' positive attitudes towards the learning of English.

The fifth question asked if students liked English at school. As it was already said, the second specific objective stated at the beginning of this study has to do with the possible causes that promote attitudes towards the learning of English. The answers provided by the participants from the first level are next: Twelve students, that is 60% answered that they liked English at school. They gave many reasons such as: the methodology was good, the classes were pleasing, there were no difficulties at any scholar year, they performed well, English was interesting, necessary and entertaining, English was needed to travel abroad, learning English was a way to access a lot of information easily, the teacher explained well and gave examples. Otherwise, eight students, it means, 40% answered that they disliked English at school because of many causes. Generally students claimed that the teacher did not master the language, other students answered that English was not attractive for them, that they did not know the importance of learning English, and that the way of teaching was not adequate and teachers made them hate the

language. In spite of these last reasons provided by students, some of them (10%) added that they liked English more at the University than at school; that is in the English courses offered by the University of Nariño.

### *Level 2*

In this question, 10 students from this level, it means 50% claimed they liked English at school. The most common reasons were that English was a necessary language, and the way of teaching was pleasant. Other reasons were:

- The topics are interesting, since there is always a moral and there was a lot of dynamic.
- The teacher is very capable.
- English is always practical.
- I have the expectation of learning another language.
- English is interesting.
- The teacher is good.

On the other hand, the other 10 students, 50% answered that they did not like English at school. The most common reason provided by students was that the teacher did not instruct very well. Others said that they disliked the subject. Other answers given by students were:

- I think that English is not necessary.
- The classes are very masterful and monotonous.

In general, 55% of students from both levels affirmed that they liked English at school, and 45% did not like English. It is important to add that those students who expressed dislike towards English at school, almost all of them blamed the teacher, the way of teaching, and the lack of training.

Taking into consideration the dislike of learning English at school, Westen (1991) states that “attitudes shaped by personal experiences are especially susceptible to influence the action”; it means, people who were personally affected in a negative way are likely to act according to their negative attitudes. However, this case is different because some students changed both, their attitudes towards the learning of English and their actions when they began to study it in the courses offered by the University. In relation to the previous assertion, Dörnyei (2001), talks about the Attribution Theory; that is the analysis of how people process past experiences of failure or success, and what consequences those will have on future achievement and strivings.

On the other hand, some students claimed that they did not like English because they thought that it was not important or necessary. Lightbown and Spada (1999), state that if learners need to speak the second language in a wide range of social situations or to fulfill professional ambitions, they will perceive the communicative value of the second language and will, therefore be motivated to acquire proficiency in it. Possibly, these surveyed students realized the importance of learning a second language, and therefore, they changed their feelings.

The sixth question concerned “what do you think about the way of teaching English in the courses offered by the University of Nariño?” For this question, students were free to give different opinions in order to reach the second specific objective. More than half students from level 1 answered that the way of teaching was good, since the quality of it and the good teachers made the courses interesting, but from this group of students, a considerable part added some problems: four students said that more levels were necessary, one claimed that the theory was good, but the practice was not sufficient, another argued that the teaching was monotonous, one more student affirmed that the schedules were not adequate, and another respondent said that the materials were not updated. Other students said that the way of teaching was very good; the main

reason for this answer was that the teachers were well trained; another reason for the same answer was that the way of teaching was an efficient and different way to acquire knowledge without pressure. Other participants affirmed that the way of teaching was excellent because speaking and writing were put in practice; the topics were very common and facilitating the learning; what was learned help the personal and professional growth. On the other hand, another student answered that the way of teaching was bad because it was necessary to improve the didactic resources. Finally, one more student said that the way of teaching depended on the motivation offered by the teacher. (See table 9).

*Table 9*

<b>Opinion about the way of teaching</b>	<b>Number of students</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Good	3	15
Good but with some problems	8	40
Very good	5	25
Excellent	2	10
Bad	1	5
Other	1	5

*Level 2*

In this question, many students from this level answered that the way of teaching was good. The reason for this answer was that the media were good for an optimal development of the classes and they were very dynamic facilitating learning. Other students said that the way of

teaching was good, but they added some problems, these were: we would learn more in a personalized or paid course, the English courses could improve, there should be more opportunities to continue the courses, more interest on the part of the teacher was necessary. Another group of students stated that the way of teaching was very good. The reasons for these answers were: the courses were good and adequate, teachers were very capable and made the courses very interesting. Others claimed that the way of teaching was excellent because it was focused on the future. Another participant provided a neutral opinion saying that English was basic and helped to do different activities. Some other students manifested some negative opinions about the way of teaching. One of them said that the classes were boring. Another affirmed that English was of a low level. Another student claimed that English in these courses was very basic and there was not any practice, only writing, and it seemed that English was only a requirement. One more participant stated that the teacher should go deep into the topics (See table 10).

**Table 10**

<b>Opinion about the way of teaching</b>	<b>Number of students</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Good	5	25
Good, but with some problems	3	15
Very good	5	25
Excellent	2	10
Negative opinions	4	20
Another	1	5

Taking as basis the previous results, generally, it can be said that 82, 5% of students from both levels thought that the way of teaching English in the courses offered by the University of Nariño was positive, but many of them (25%) added some problems. Another 5 % gave neutral opinions, and 12, 5 % said that the way of teaching was negative, but from this last percentage, there were also some students (5%) who provided answers that were not related to the way of teaching, but to other aspects of the courses such as the fact that the courses were of low level or basic.

The previous outcomes mean that the majority of students provided positive answers confirming that the way of teaching could be a possible cause of students' attitudes towards English in these courses. It is important to keep in mind that the way teachers instruct is one of the factors influencing the different attitudes that students present towards the learning of English because it involves many aspects; teaching techniques, materials, tips, different activities to promote language learning, and the management of learning on the part of the teacher by assessing the learners' progress to adjust his teaching.

Lightbown and Spada (1999) state that students enjoy studying when the contents are interesting and relevant to their age and level of ability, the objectives are manageable and clear yet challenging, and the atmosphere is pleasant. In this way, teachers can encourage their students to learn. Students are reassured by the classroom routines which they can depend on. However, the lessons consisting on the same routines, patterns and formats have been shown to lead to a decrease in attention and an increase in boredom.

Taking into consideration the third specific objective: to determine the influence of attitudes on the English leaning process, it is important to clarify that this objective will be accomplished taking as a basis the literature review.

According to Bieri (1966), Suedfeld and Granatstein (1995); quoted by Westen (1999) attitudes which are already defined as negative or positive are less complex than those which are independent. In this way, the last ones produce better judgments; but, it does not always lead to correct conclusions (Westen, 1999). Taking into consideration the previous commentary, it is possible that students who have neutral attitudes provide more conscious opinions about a fact, in this case the learning of English.

If an individual has a strong attitude towards something, his emotional reaction is also going to be strong; but, if an individual has an indifferent attitude towards something, his reaction is going to be neutral (Cacioppo, Gardner & Berntson, 1997; Priester & Petty, 1996; quoted by Westen, 1999). In the same way, depending on the strong or indifferent students' attitudes towards the learning of English, their reactions towards this aspect are also going to be strong or indifferent. Attitudes which are low in a positive or negative way have a minimum impact on the behavior (Smith, 1993; quoted by Westen, 1999). It could be possible to say that students who have a low positive or negative attitude towards the learning of English, their behavior will not be totally positive or negative.

So that an attitude can have an impact on the immediate thoughts and behaviors, it must be cognitively accessible. Accessibility refers to "the facility which an attitude activates with" (Fazio, 1990, 1995; quoted by Westen, 1999). It means that highly accessible attitudes activate quickly and automatically if a fact related to a determined attitude happens. The same happens in this case because if students continue experiencing all the time the same impediments to learn English, their attitudes are also going to persist and the English learning process is not going to be successful.

Several factors may influence the way people behave. First of all, "people's attitudes do predict their actions if the attitude and action are at the same level of generability, and particularly if both are relatively specific" (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1977; Kraus, 1975, quoted by Westen, 1999). For example, if students are asked about their attitudes towards the learning of English, this does not predict if they are going to act in a specific way; but, if they are asked about their attitudes towards the course materials, the schedules, the way of teaching, the classroom environment, as it was made in this study, this predicts how they are going to act in the classroom.

From a behaviorist perspective, behavior is controlled by environmental consequences; but, from a cognitive perspective, behavior is controlled by implicit processes or habits, which demonstrate that people have unconscious attitudes that control their behavior (Ouellette & Wood, 1997; quoted by Westen, 1999). On the other hand, it is probable that explicit attitudes predict behavior when there is a conscious reflection on such attitudes, but, the implicit ones explain the way in which people act because they are more automatic (Westen, 1999). It is possible that students consider English learning as a habit, due to the fact that they have to attend classes almost every day. At this point, their attitudes towards the learning of English become more automatic, and their behavior in the classroom is easier to predict.

The way in which attitudes are acquired influence the impact of the attitudes and the behavior (Westen, 1999). About this, it is important to notice that if students were directly affected in a negative or positive way, inside or outside the language classroom in the English learning process, the impact of their attitudes and their behavior will be more visible.

On the other hand, it is said that the vicious circle of the negative attitudes begins when teachers start discouraging themselves when they observe the low results of the students, and



when the students observe this situation, they start opposing the course and even the extrinsic motivation disappears. At this point, teachers and students only want to finish the course for blaming each other for the failure. The influence of the students' and teachers' negative attitudes on the learning process is very relevant because their behavior begins to change and the results at the end of the course are not good. However, there are students who want to learn a language because of its possible usefulness or for the pleasure of knowing a new language.

Learners also have attitudes towards the materials; for example, adults do not like course books. They prefer a variety of materials to use them in their own way (Ellis, 1985). Sometimes, there are conflicts between students and teachers, and students and peers; therefore, students develop certain attitudes toward the teacher and the classroom environment, which generates unpleasant situations (Amato, 1998).

In general, self-esteem leads to self-confidence, and it is related to the appropriate performance. That is, people perform well, when their attitude toward self is positive. According to Stevick (1976); quoted by Amato (1998) self-security is also an important part of the attitude toward self because if the individual feels good as a social and human being, this person will probably perform better in the process of acquiring a second language.

A lack of self-esteem could contribute learners form negative attitudes towards their capability to learn in an autonomous way (Westen, 1991).

On the other hand, the attitudes that a person has toward the target language and the target group, especially peers, is another fundamental aspect. Gardner and Lambert (1972); quoted by Amato (1998) say that these attitudes may determine the success in learning the new language. Learning usually occurs more easily when there are positive attitudes towards the

second language community. So, prejudices towards the second language community must be broken down, a learner must realize the common interests with its members (Littlewood, 1996). Stereotyping plays an important role here because it creates a social barrier that inhibits communication and learning, which also affects the self-image of the people being stereotyped. Negative stereotypes also bring negative reactions and encourage negative attitudes toward the target language and culture (Saville-Troike, 1976; quoted by Amato, 1998).

Attitudes to learner autonomy are another vital feature, that is, attitudes about his role in the language learning process and his capability as a learner. Autonomous learners are responsible for their learning; they are self-confident and able to self-direct their learning because they believe in their ability to learn (Wenden, 1991).

Learner beliefs about their role and capability as learners are shaped and kept by other beliefs about themselves. For example, when learners think that they do not have the ability to learn a language, or they believe that certain personalities cannot successfully learn a language. These students' beliefs and the behaviors implied by those beliefs are not easy to change. On the other hand, evaluations of acceptability and unacceptability are intrinsic to learners' beliefs and predispose them to be willing or unwilling to take on responsibility for their learning. So, evaluations are not always related to learners' beliefs because learners can evaluate themselves according to what they see or feel, and beliefs not always lead to an action (Wenden, 1991).

In some cases, socialization processes lead to a belief of dependence rather than independence in adults (Mezirow, 1985; quoted by Wenden, 1991). According to Knowles (1976); quoted by Wenden (1991), this attitude may be acquired from the school where students find that learning is up to formal institutions and the teacher. For students, they are consumers of learning and teachers are the source of knowledge and who make the decision about success or

failure in examinations (Holec, 1987; quoted by Wenden, 1991). These assumptions affect the attitude as autonomous learners because the engagement on the part of them becomes minimal and the language learning process becomes passive.

There are different reasons why people learn a foreign language; for necessity, for daily survival, for achieving other goal, and for fulfilling a requisite for a degree. Due to the fact that the adult learner has many needs, roles and concerns, learning a foreign language is not usually given to priority. For them, learning a language is an obstacle; therefore, they think they should spend as little time, energy, and effort as possible (Wenden, 1991). This is an unfavorable attitude because it decreases the interest to learn.

According to Wright (1987); quoted by Wenden (1991) there are two factors that influence role formation and maintenance. The first ones are the interpersonal factors including status, position, attitudes and beliefs about teaching and learning, personality and motivation. The second ones are the task-related factors including the task goal, the task itself and the topics or subject matter of the task. Both factors can influence the role that learners assume in the classroom and the expectations they hold regarding the teacher's role and their classmates' roles. Depending on the role that students assume in the classroom, based on their attitudes and beliefs about the teaching and learning, their personality, motivation and task-related factors, they will be successful or unsuccessful in the English Learning process.

Besides, ignorance about their mental processes may also contribute to learners' lack of willingness and self-confidence in the learning process (Wenden, 1991). That means that many students do not believe in their intellectual potential. In this case, when students believe they are not capable of learning a new language and they are incapable of change this fact, they develop

negative attitudes which affect their self-confidence and consequently, the English learning process.

It has been shown that failure in learning makes some learners have unproductive thoughts about their lack of ability (Diener & Dweck, 1978, 1980; quoted by Wenden, 1991). Knowles (1975) quoted by Wenden (1991) explains that these beliefs acquired in childhood are part of the adult's self-concept; therefore, these earlier views will influence their performance in their role as learners. "As a result, many regress to a state of 'learned helplessness', believing themselves incapable of learning without a teacher" (Wenden, 1991). This attitude influences students' performance and on the learning process because they develop thoughts of incapacity to learn, and they become dependent on the teacher.

In fact, the learning of a language is influenced by different attitudes, and depending on the nature of them, learning will be a successful or unsuccessful experience for students.

As regards to the fourth specific objective: to find out about changes that would be necessary to promote positive attitudes towards the learning of English, the seventh question about what students would like to change about their English class, revealed that only two participants from the first level considered that changes were not necessary. On the contrary, many surveyed students mentioned many possible changes for their English classes, and even some students mentioned two changes. For instance, some students agree with the fact that teachers should use more didactic resources such as videos, recordings, magazines and movies in order to gain more knowledge of English. Another representative group of students claimed that there should be more hours of instruction. Others said that they would like to change the schedules, but one of them added that there was no public transportation at that time and the

danger in the city was huge. It is important to highlight that these last students took the English courses in the evening, from 6 to 9 p.m. Other free answers given by the students were:

- To change the low grades given by the teacher, in spite of the good performance from the student.
- To change the place where the classes are taken.
- Teachers should be more interactive using the technology.
- Teachers should base the classes on listening and speaking more than writing.
- More time to finish the workshops in class.
- Videos and recorders in good condition.
- To emphasize more vocabulary and expressions in order to improve the communication.
- More translation and writing.
- To change the coursebook monotony consisting on developing and translating it.

### *Level 2*

In this question, the majority of students from this level stated that changes were not necessary, and they gave some reasons: the way of teaching is good, the methodology is dynamic facilitating the learning, and the changes are not relevant.

On the other hand, some participants said that there should be more resources such as recordings, computers, laboratories, videos and movies. A few students claimed that the classes should be more dynamic, and others said that the schedules should be more varied in order to attend to classes without any interference with the career. Other free answers provided by other participants were:

- There should be more hours of English classes.
- There should be facility to access to more advanced levels.

- English should be studied without interference with the career.
- English should be more practical.
- Teachers should use more Spanish to make English more understandable.
- Teachers should devote more time to the topics, and practices should be based on real life.
- Teacher should be more responsible regarding to the engagement with the students.
- The place of teaching is not agreeable.

Taking into consideration students from the first level, 15% of them said that any change would be necessary and obviously 85% agreed with the fact that many changes would be necessary. On the other hand, while 30% of the students from the second level claimed that any change would be necessary, 70% affirmed that some changes would be necessary.

In general, the majority of students from both levels (77%) stated that they would like to change a lot of things of their English classes; some of them had already been named as impediments. They named as main change the use of more didactic resources, but they also coincided with some aspects such as the insufficiency of hours of instruction and English levels, the inconformity with the schedules and the discontent with the place where the courses take place. In addition, students from level 1 added the low grades in spite of the good performance, more listening and pronunciation instead of writing, the course book monotony, more translation and writing, more vocabulary and expressions. What is more, students from level 2 added the importance of the use of more Spanish to make English more understandable, more practicality of the language, more time to be devoted to the topics, more responsibility on the part of the teachers regarding to the engagement with the students.

Considering the previous results, it can be inferred that students would like to acquire more knowledge about English, not only the bases of the language. Regarding the place of instruction, it can be deduced that students are used to study in a different environment (Torobajo), and probably they do not feel well in the Panamericana campus. As it is observed, some students from level 1 prefer more listening and pronunciation, while others prefer more translation and writing. As Lightbown and Spada (1999) state, learners have clear preferences to learn new material. The term learning style has been used to describe an individual's natural, habitual, and preferred way of absorbing, processing, and retaining new information and skills (Reid, 1995; quoted by Lightbown and Spada, 1999). There are visual learners who can not learn something until they have seen it; aural learners who seem to need only to hear something once or twice before they know it; kinesthetic learners who need to add a physical action to the learning process. Some others students asked for the implementation of more vocabulary and expressions, which is feasible since it is known that these English courses are communicative, and therefore it is necessary to be familiar with a lot of vocabulary and expressions to carry out a good communication. In the same way, the classes must be in English, and as Richards and Rodgers (1986) state, a prudent use of the native language is permitted in CLT (Communicative Language Teaching). However, whenever possible, the target language should be used not only during communicative activities, but also for explaining the activities to the students or in assigning homework so that they realize that the target language is a vehicle for communication, not just an object to be studied. About the answer given by one student referring to the coursebook monotony, Strevens (1978) claims that the best teachers use materials prepared by others, but often making their own improvements and using the textbooks only as a general guide. On the other hand, the poorest teachers rely totally on the teaching materials made by

others, and their effectiveness as teachers is determined by the prescribed textbooks. Referring to the change proposed by one student about the increase of time devoted to the topics, Dörnyei (2001), states that some learners do not enjoy language learning and blame their teachers for reasons such as going on and on without realizing that teachers have already lost everybody, not giving enough clear instructions, and not explaining things sufficiently. In spite of this, it is also clear that some students need more time to master the aspects of the language.

In order to make a more complex analysis of the data collected, and consequently obtain more valid results, the questionnaire contained a section available for additional commentaries. Some students provided commentaries with the purpose of improving their attitudes towards the learning of English, and others did not provide any commentary. Some students from level 1 said that there should be more English levels. Other students claimed that there should be more resources and technology for them and for the teachers. One participant added that the schedules were not adequate. One more student said that the contents should adapt to the careers in order to foster the like for the language and have a wide expectative. Some students of the second level agreed with the commentary from students of level 1, claiming that there should be more resources and media of learning. In the same way, while in the first level, some students said that there should be more English levels, in the second level, only one student claimed that there should also be more levels to guarantee an optimal learning. Another respondent said that English should be included in the curriculum in order to learn more about it. Another participant from level 2 stated that the schedules should be improved. One more applicant said that students should be motivated to attend to class, and finally one last participant provided a good commentary affirming that the English classes offered a lot of knowledge and that it was important to learn English.



Making a more specific analysis, it can be said that 35% of students from both levels provided additional commentaries and 65% did not give any commentary. Taking into account the students who provided commentaries, it is important to remark that 10% of them said that there should be more resources and media of learning, 7, 5% claimed that there should be more English levels, 15% gave other commentaries, and 2, 5% provided a good commentary. Besides, some of the additional commentaries were mentioned in the questions about the impediments and good aims and possible changes. Considering the commentary about focusing the contents on the professional orientation, it can be inferred that this students referred to English for occupational purposes (EOP), which is related to occupational purposes, e.g. those of working doctors, engineers or business people (Dudley, 2002; quoted by , 2002). However, the English taught in these courses is for academic purposes (EAP), it means the English needed in educational contexts, usually at a university or a similar institution, and possibly also at the school level (Dudley, 2002; quoted by Richards & Renandya, 2006).

Taking into consideration, the answer given by one student about including English in the curriculum, it can be inferred that this student meant that English should be taught all along the career. As regard to the good commentary provided by one student about the importance of learning English, The Ministry of Education (2006), states that nowadays, communicating in a foreign language is an indispensable ability because it not only makes possible the academic and work mobility, but also it is one of the basis on which the competitive capacity is built and it is a tool to meet other cultures and live new experiences.

## CHAPTER V: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### *Conclusions*

According to Gardner (1985); quoted by Lightbown and Spada (1999), positive attitudes are related to success in second language learning. This is the reason why it is important to know the students' attitudes in the language learning process. Nonetheless, it is not known precisely whether the positive attitudes produce successful learning, or successful learning enhances the attitudes, or whether both are affected by other factors.

All along this study, it was possible to note that the majority of the surveyed students showed favorable attitudes towards the learning of English in the courses for undergraduate students offered by the University of Nariño. Their main arguments which can be interpreted as possible causes were related to the teachers' positive attitudes and good training. Nevertheless, the main arguments to justify the unfavorable attitudes presented by other students were related to the lack of resources, the inconformity with the schedules and the lack of English levels. Some of the possible causes of students' unfavorable attitudes named in the problem description coincided with the results obtained in this research; These factors were the teaching techniques used by the teacher, teachers' attitudes, and the fact that English is a subject that requires a lot of study and in some cases students do not have enough time to devote to it.

It was also possible to note that students who had a positive attitude towards the learning of English participated in class, attended class, paid attention, did homework as better as possible, studied for the exams, practiced by listening to songs and translating texts. But students who had a negative attitude did not attend classes or did it for accomplishing that requirement, they did not show interest, they did not deliver homework and they did the activities with dislike.

As noted in this study, the teacher is a central part in shaping the students' attitudes, but there are also other factors which influence on them; For instance, the classroom environment, the course materials, the target language and other external factors such as the socio-economic level and the institutional policies. Besides, there are other internal factors very difficult to notice, these are, learner autonomy, the attitude towards the self, feelings of helplessness and incompetence and self-esteem.

Naturally, a student who considers the language as something nonsense will be less successful than another who has a positive attitude due to language learning is influenced by different attitudes which can be positive and negative.

#### *Suggestions and Recommendations*

Taking into consideration the answers given by students in the question about the possible changes in the English courses, they mentioned that teachers should use more didactic resources such as videos, computers, magazines, movies, newspapers, especially the language laboratory, not only the coursebook. Lightbown and Spada (1999) state that varying the materials, activities and tasks can decrease boredom and increase students' interest.

They also mentioned the insufficiency of hours of instruction and English levels. Taking into consideration this suggestion, the University should offer students the opportunity to access freely to more advanced levels or extra English classes. Other students disagreed with the place where the courses take place. It is known that the language center is located in the Panamericana Avenue; however, the University should also offer some courses in the Torobajo campus in order to reduce this complain.

Besides, students from level 1 would like to improve the low grades in spite of their great effort, more listening and pronunciation instead of writing, more translation and writing, and

more vocabulary and expressions also were suggested. Regarding the first part, it can be suggested that teachers should value not only the grades, but also the students' effort in order to promote good attitudes towards the learning of English. About the second part, it is known that these courses are communicative; however, teachers should work on all the English skills because students have different learning preferences when learning.

What is more, students from level 2 suggested more time to be devoted to the topics and more responsibility on the part of the teachers regarding the engagement with the students. Regarding the first one, teachers should be sure that all the students have understood the topic taught. About the second one, the administrators should be sure that teachers fulfill their engagements.

Some ways to model students' interest in L2 learning are: to consider the students' learning process and achievement very seriously since showing insufficient commitment on the part of the teacher is the fastest way to undermine students' motivation; to show students that teachers value L2 learning as a meaningful experience that produces satisfaction and enriches their lives; and share teachers' personal interest in L2 and L2 learning with the students (Dörnyei, 1994, 2001).

One more applicant said that students should be motivated to attend class. As Lewis (1998) quoted by Richards and Renandya (2006) states, some students have an intrinsic motivation, but others must be reminded of the benefits of learning English such as getting a good job, travelling abroad, etc.

As regards to the suggestions about focusing the contents on the professional orientation, one possible suggestion would be to implement English courses which combine both English for occupational purposes (EOP) and English for academic purposes (EAP) because it is known that

these courses take place in an educational context, but students who take them study different careers.

On the other hand, Dörnyei (2001), states some strategies to contribute to promote good attitudes: by enhancing the learners' language-related values and attitudes, by increasing learners' goal-orientedness, by making the curriculum relevant for the learners, and by creating realistic learners' beliefs

The value system refers to internalized perceptions, beliefs and feelings related to the students' position in the social world in which three main value dimensions can be distinguished: the intrinsic value which refers to arousing the students' curiosity and attention, and creating an attractive image of the course; integrativeness which suggests to make the L2 real by introducing learners in their cultural background, using authentic materials, and promoting contact with native speakers of the L2; instrumentality which refers to the potential usefulness of the L2 for both, students and their community and the importance of the mastery of the L2 to achieve other goals in class such as prizes, celebration, good grades.

The second strategy suggests setting a group goal, since sometimes students do not understand why they are involved in a learning activity.

The third strategy proposes to find out the students' goals and the topics they want to learn, and in this way to build the curriculum in order students see the materials as worth learning.

The fourth and last strategy recommends rectifying students' erroneous assumptions; therefore, they need to understand very well the nature of second language acquisition and reasonable criteria for progress. They should know that the mastery of a L2 can be achieved in different ways, using several strategies and techniques.

Dörnyei (2001) also mentions positive self evaluation as a factor enhancing motivation because it has to do with how students feel about their past accomplishments. In failure situations, teachers should emphasize the low effort as a strong reason for underachievement because this communicates to students that they can do better in the future. But, when failure occurs in spite of hard work on the students' part, it is better to point out the skills/ knowledge that were missing and can be mastered. If students are successful, it should not be attributed entirely to effort, but also to a stable cause such as talent.

Providing effective feedback is another aspect to be considered. When students are doing a task, it's necessary to provide relevant examples to make students realize that the task can be attained. The teacher should also communicate that he believes that students are capable of reaching certain predetermined goals, and should provide information about how well students are applying a strategy and how strategy use is improving their performance. Nevertheless, teachers must be conscious of the negative effects of certain aspects of feedback on learners' behavior (Dörnyei, 2001). For instance, as Graham (1994); quoted by Dörnyei (2001) highlights, communicating pity instead of anger after failure, offering praise after success in easy tasks, and offering unsolicited help such as supplying answers outright are not positive feedback.

Increasing learner satisfaction is another way to influence students' behavior by allowing students to create finished products that they can perform, by encouraging them to be proud of themselves after accomplishing a task, by taking a regular stock of their general progress, and by celebrating their success and using appropriate rewards (Covington, 1999; quoted by Dörnyei, 2001).

On the other hand, one important aspect in changing attitudes is persuasion that consists on making people change their attitudes. At this point, teachers can use their teaching techniques

and their knowledge to persuade students to learn English. For instance, the classical conditioning that consists on making people associate something with a positive feeling (Westen, 1999). Teachers can teach a topic making students associate it with attractive things or situations for them.

According to Chaiken (1980), Simons et al. (1970); quoted by Westen (1999) the speakers are more persuasive when they appear attractive, credible, expert, trustworthy, powerful, and similar to the receiver. Sometimes, students see the teacher as a powerful person. Teachers should take advantage of that for trying to change students' attitudes towards the learning of English.

The type of appeal and the way it is conveyed also affect the attitude change (Westen, 1999). Teachers should be careful when persuading students because for example, fear appeals may contribute to change students' attitudes, but because of fear. It is also important to choose the means by which the message is sent because it is more effective a verbal message provided by the teacher in front of the students than a written message.

On the other hand, inducing people first to change their behavior is one of the most effective strategies for changing attitudes. The foot-in-the-door technique is one of these strategies and it is based on the assumption that when people accept a small request, they will probably accept a bigger one later (Beaman et al., 1983; quoted by Westen, 1999). In the same way, teachers must give suggestions to students related to class participation, attendance to class, efforts, etc, so that they change little by little their attitudes towards the learning of English.

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Appendix A

*Questionnaire for Students*

UNIVERSIDAD DE NARIÑO

FACULTAD DE CIENCIAS HUMANAS

LICENCIATURA EN INGLES-FRANCES

“ACTITUDES HACIA EL APRENDIZAJE DEL INGLES EN LOS CURSOS DE INGLES PARA LOS PROGRAMAS DE PREGRADO, NIVEL 1 Y 2, EN LA UNIVERSIDAD DE NARIÑO”

Apreciado(a) estudiante:

La presente encuesta tiene por objeto obtener información relacionada con las diferentes actitudes que los estudiantes pueden presentar en torno al aprendizaje del inglés en los niveles 1 y 2 de los cursos de inglés para facultades. Sus respuestas nos permitirán analizar las causas que promueven estas actitudes negativas y formular posibles soluciones con el fin de mejorar la enseñanza y el aprendizaje del inglés en dichos cursos.

Teniendo en cuenta que los fines de esta información son exclusivamente investigativos, solicitamos a usted responder el presente cuestionario con la mayor sinceridad posible. Usted puede ser partícipe del cambio educativo en nuestra institución.

Gracias por su colaboración.

**CUESTIONARIO**

1. Sexo:  Masculino  Femenino  
 2. Nivel que está cursando:  Primero  Segundo

3. Edad: \_\_\_\_\_

4. Marque con una X el grado en que usted está de acuerdo o en desacuerdo con cada una de las opciones de las siguientes afirmaciones:

Lo que más me gusta de la clase de Inglés es:

	1	2	3	4
	Muy en desacuerdo	En desacuerdo	De acuerdo	Muy de acuerdo
Los materiales	_____	_____	_____	_____
La forma de enseñar	_____	_____	_____	_____
El ambiente de clase	_____	_____	_____	_____
El horario	_____	_____	_____	_____

5. Conteste en forma concreta las siguientes interrogantes:

a. ¿Cómo se siente cuando asiste a sus clases de Inglés?

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b. ¿Cómo demuestra su gusto o indiferencia por el Inglés en clase?

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c. ¿Cuál es la actitud del profesor en las clases de Inglés?

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d. ¿Qué impedimentos o aciertos encuentra para aprender el Inglés en estos cursos?

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e. ¿En el colegio le gustaba el Inglés? ¿Por qué?

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f. ¿Qué opina de la forma como se enseña el Inglés en los cursos que ofrece la Universidad de Nariño a los estudiantes de pregrado?

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g. ¿Qué le gustaría cambiar de sus clases de Inglés?

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**Comentarios adicionales**

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