

The Construction of an Attitude Scale to Measure Student Attitude toward the English Language

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A. Psychological Background to Attitude Measurement.

First we need to select a definition of attitude among the many at present current. Our definition must not only be an adequate description of attitude structure and an explication of the process by which attitudes are formed and changed but also it must relate in a theoretical way to the techniques of attitude measurement.

A review of the various definitions of attitude brought the experimenter to the conclusion that the definition put forward by Shaw and Wright would best fulfil the criteria as expounded above. Their definition is as follows:

...attitude..... (is) a relatively enduring system of affective, evaluative reactions based upon and reflecting the evaluative concepts or beliefs which have been learned about the characteristics of a social object or class of social objects.¹⁾

They state that as an affective reaction, it is a covert or implicit response.²⁾ Also that it is a drive-producing response which elicits motives and hence gives rise to overt behavior. It must be remembered that attitude scales can measure only one dimension of the affective reactions and that measure is of the positive-

negative continuum.

B. Some Characteristics of Attitudes.

1. Attitudes are thought of as varying in quality and intensity on a continuum from positive through neutral to negative (Kretch et al., 1962; McGrath, 1964; Newcomb, Turner, and Converse, 1965). Quality is represented by valence (positive or negative) and the intensity of the attitude is represented by the extremity of the position occupied and becoming stronger and stronger as a position moves outward from the neutral point.

2. Attitudes are learned, rather than being innate or a result of constitutional development and maturation (Sherif and Sherif, 1956; McGrath, 1954)

3. Attitudes are relatively stable and enduring (Newcomb et al., 1964; Sherif and Sherif, 1956)

4. Attitudes have specific social referents or specific class thereof (Sherif and Sherif, 1956; Newcomb et al., 1965) These referents do not have to be concrete objects but can also be abstract.

C. Attitude Scale Construction

The usual method used for measuring attitudes requires the subject to indicate his agreement or disagreement with a number of statements about the attitude object and these statements are usually positively or negatively evaluated. The attitude toward the object is

1) M. E. Shaw and J. M. Wright, Scales for the measurement of attitudes, p. 10

2) Ibid. p. 10

inferred from the statements endorsed by the subject based on the usual interpretation of the statements.

D. Likert's Method of Summated Ratings.

This method requires a large number of items having the characteristic that the more favorable the individual's attitude toward the attitude object, the higher his expected score for the item.

The subject indicates his position using the following categories: strongly agree, agree, undecided, disagree, strongly disagree—numbered 4, 3, 2, 1 and 0 respectively. This scoring is reversed for negatively worded statements.

All items are scored and the top 25% (that is, the 25% of the total number of subjects having the highest scores) and the lowest 25% are separated out in order to determine the critical ratio based on the means and variances of these two groups. It is assumed that the intercorrelations between the items is due to a single common factor to which all the items are mutually related.

E. Procedure

First year girl students in the English department of Rissho Gakuen Junior College were asked to fill in the attitude scale (reproduced

below) by blacking-in the circles under which ever heading (strongly agree etc.) they thought appropriate. They were told that it was not necessary to write their names on their papers if they did not want to. The number of girls participating was 121. The experimenter told them that all the papers would be mixed up while being collected in order to allay any fears that individual papers could be traced. He also remained in the front of the class in such a position in which he could not see how the papers were being marked.

F. Analysis.

All the papers were scored and the top 25% (N=30) and the bottom 25% (N=30) were selected and t-scores for the two groups were calculated for each item. The items marked with a star(*) are those for which a significant difference between the means of the high and low groups was found at the 0.1 level thus forcing the experimenter to reject the null hypothesis i. e. that there is no significant difference between the means of the high group and the low group on item number... The starred items have since been incorporated in to another attitude scale and used in a further experiment reported elsewhere.

G. Measurement of Attitude toward the English Language Scale

Translated into Japanese

Item	Number	Positive or Negative	t-score
1	I want to <u>continue</u> my study of English after I have completed my study in this school	P	+1.47
*2	Studying English in school is a waste of time	N	-5.51
*3	I enjoy my English classes	P	+3.21
4	I really wish to study some course other than English	N	-1.25

*5	I wish to read books in English rather <u>than</u> the Japanese translations	P	+5.47
*6	I have to spend so much time learning English that I have no time to enjoy life	N	-2.14
*7	Even though learning English in school is expensive, it is not a waste of time	P	+2.43
*8	I dislike my English classes	N	-3.02
9	English will be useless in my future life	N	-1.7
*10	I wish I <u>had</u> more time to study English	P	+3.67
*11	English is interesting	P	+5.84
12	I learn English because I have to.	N	-0.07
*13	Studying English is <u>nonsense</u>	N	-6.15
*14	I am glad that I chose the English course rather than some other course of study	P	+6.68
*15	Learning English is a waste of time	N	-9.64
*16	English will be useful in my future life	P	+4.03
*17	English is unimportant	N	-7.60
18	It is impossible to study enough English to be useful during my study here	N	-0.0095
*19	I learn English because I want to	P	+5.8
*20	Learning English is time consuming	N	-2.68
*21	English is important	P	+6.21
22	I am studying English because I have nothing better to do	N	-0.96
*23	Learning English opens up a new world to me	P	+3.05
*24	English is dull	N	-2.26
*25	Learning English allows me to read about wonderful and interesting things	P	+2.50

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