

## THE CORRELATION BETWEEN STUDENTS' READING ATTITUDE AND THEIR READING COMPREHENSION ACHIEVEMENT

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### Abstract

*This study was aimed at finding out (1)) whether or not there was a significant correlation between students' reading attitude and their reading comprehension,. The data were collected by distributing questionnaire sheets and testing a reading comprehension test for 170 students. Pearson Product Moment Coefficients Correlation and Regression Analysis were used to find out whether or not there was a significant relationship between students' reading attitude toward reading comprehension achievement of the fourth semester students of English education study program of FKIP Universitas Muhammadiyah Palembang as well as their contribution. The findings of the study showed that, students' reading attitude only had a very small contribution to their reading comprehension achievement.*

**Keywords:** *students' reading attitude, and students' reading comprehension achievement*

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### Introduction

Reading, one of the skills in learning a language, plays a crucial role to learning success. By reading a lot, students can learn and gain abundant information. Burns, et al (1984, p.11) state that reading is a complex act that must be learned. It is also a means by which further learning takes place. In other words, a person learns to read and reads to learn. Those statements assert that how important reading skill to be mastered by students.

Dealing with reading, there are two major factors affecting students' comprehension in reading. They are internal factor and external factor (Sadeghi, 2007). Internal factor means factor coming out from the personal learner as a reader. It includes students' cognitive abilities, strategies, background knowledge and effective characteristics. Meanwhile, external factors is factor appearing from the outside of personal learner as a reader. It includes text variable, context variable, and author variable. This study stressed on the internal factor influencing students' reading comprehension achievement, in other words, the personal learner as a reader.

Next, the affective side of learners is probably one of the very biggest influences on language learning success or failure (Oxford, 1990, p.140). The statement above sheds light on that students' attitude toward learning especially in reading may be one of the factors that promotes students' reading comprehension achievement. The term "affective" refers to emotion, attitudes, motivation, and values (Oxford, 1990, p. 140). The statements above get stronger and stronger when Wixon & Lipson cited in Kear (1990, p.626) states that the student's attitude towards reading is a central factor affecting reading performance.

Pusat Pengelolaan Data dan Sistem Jaringan Depbudpar, 2009 (BAPPENAS, 2009) reported that in 2006 the number of library visitors reached 4.70 million people, nevertheless, that number dropped to 4.43 million people in 2007. Then, in 2008, it fell again to 4.42 million people. In South Sumatera, the number of library visitors went down significantly from 60,544 visitors in 2007 to 3899 visitors in 2008. The number of library visitors in 2008 was only 1.9 percent if it was compared with Indonesia's population of 228 million inhabitants. From the previous data above, it

can be assumed that only few people might have positive reading attitude. That data from Depbudpar above was only one of indicators to measure one's attitude, thus, it cannot be used as a fixed price to judge students' attitude in reading since many people prefer finding information through electronic media that can be accessed twenty-four hours.

By the way, the concept of reading attitude itself is a system of feelings related to reading which causes the learner to approach or avoid a reading situation (Alexander & Filler, 1976: 1). The existence of the impact between students' reading attitude and students' reading achievement is blossoming by the notion of McKenna et al (1995) in Donaldson (2010:17), they claim that it is logical that reading attitudes and achievement scores would have an impact on each other because they have found from their studies that the students with the highest achievement scores had higher reading attitudes in general and vice versa.

The findings above associated with students' reading achievement motivated or initiated this study. Thus, students' attitude in reading became one of the reasons why this topic chosen as one of the variables in this study. This research tried to find out whether or not students' reading attitude affected on their reading comprehension achievement.

There are many things to be improved in several aspects of education. One of them is students' reading skills because reading is a mainstream that can support learning in multiple ways. Knowing the students' attitudes toward reading enables the teacher to detect the causes of the weakness of their students in reading. As for, a number of teachers should be more sensitive to design an appropriate material or create fun reading activities in order to grow or spread students' positive attitudes or alter student negative attitude to positive attitude towards reading. Furthermore, Indonesia position in PISA or other programmes or survey in reading skill for following year could be better or improving.

FKIP UMP is one of the private universities in Palembang. English Education Study Program is one of the

majors in FKIP. The teaching and learning activities, especially reading subject has three credit hours or it has 45 minutes x 3 per week for sixteen meetings in one semester. Based on the fore mentioned notions, this study investigated the relationship of reading attitude, and reading comprehension achievement of the fourth semester students of English Education Study Program of FKIP Muhammadiyah University, Palembang.

Based on the previous background, the problems of this study were formulated in these following Was there any relationship between students' reading attitude and students' reading comprehension achievement of the fourth-semester students of English education program of FKIP Muhammadiyah University Palembang?, and how much was the contribution of students' reading attitude on students' reading comprehension achievement?

Reading is a mental process or an activity of processing and understanding information from printed texts. In as much as, reading is not only relied much on our knowledge of each of words in a text but also able to digest the content offered in a text, or Dallman (1982) stresses that cited in Marantina (2006:6)

Reading is more than knowing what each a letter of alphabet stands for, reading involves more than recognition, without comprehension, no reading takes place.

It can be concluded that reading is an intentional process of learning in order to gain information, to enhance vocabulary as well as to construct the meaning from written text or printed text.

Snow (2002: 11) states that reading comprehension is the process of simultaneously extracting and constructing meaning through interaction and involvement with written language. Comprehension entails three elements: the reader who is doing the comprehending, the text that is to be comprehended, and the activity in which comprehension is a part. Moreover, comprehension requires good decoding ability (Perfetti, 1985), linguistic

comprehension, and inference-making skills (Gough & Tunmer, 1986, Nation & Snowling, 1997, 1998, Snowling, 1998) cited in Puttonen, et al (2002).

Besides, The U.S. National Reading Panel cited in Armbuster et al, 2001 defines reading comprehension as a complex system of deriving meaning from prints that requires The skill and knowledge to understand how phonemes, or speech sounds, are connected to prints, The ability to decode unfamiliar words. The ability to read fluently, Sufficient background information and vocabulary to foster reading comprehension, The development of appropriate active strategies to construct meaning from print, The development and maintenance of a motivation to read.

To sum up, reading comprehension is a process of integrating readers' word knowledge, logical thinking, reading strategies and reader affective side for some information

Briggs & Gagne (1979:126), R.Gagne (1985) in Ragan and Smith (1999: 68), Scholl (2002:2), and Baron and Byrne (1984:126) define an attitude as an enduring mental tendency or human capability that affects the certain act or behaviour and state of feeling or belief on particular entity, such as specific persons, ideas, objects, or groups. Another concept defined by Gregory (2004:483) states that:

an attitude is learned cognitive, affective, or behavioral predisposition to respond positively or negatively to certain objects, situation, institutions, concepts, or persons. Attitudes have an evaluative component and serve motivational functions by helping individuals organize their perception and make sense out of the world.

Finally, it can be concluded that an attitude is a particular feeling that enables to affect one's choice, conduction, or perception toward specific aspect in definite situation.

Following are some concepts defined by some experts or researchers about reading attitude. Namely, Alexander and Filler

(1976: 1) states that: reading attitude is a system of feelings related to reading which causes the learner to approach or avoid a reading situation. Reading attitude is an internal aspect which help learner develop and have live long reading skill. Smith (1990: 215) in Yamashita (2004) describes that reading attitude is

a state of mind, accompanied by feelings and emotions, that makes reading more or less probable.

Then, it can be concluded that reading attitude is how one's judgment or conduction toward all activities which are related to reading situation.

Attitude as the description of how people feel is an important factor to build, in this case positive attitude, whether it is to people, things, or ideas. Kubiszyn & Borich (1993:171) state that attitude measurement can help most of the classroom teacher.

1. to identify the students' reading comprehension early in the school year, and may implement strategies to best utilize and challenge the turn on student (those with positive attitude) and to better motivate the turn off students (those with negative attitude).
2. to assess general changes that may take place in attitude over time.
3. to determine the effect on students' attitude of specific aspects of the school or classroom experience.

It can be deduced that measuring reading attitude has some essential benefits in order to recognize the role of the implication of the attitude itself in reading, enable another researcher to do longitudinal research, to know some factors affecting students' attitude in reading.

The affective side of learners is probably one of the very biggest influences on language learning success or failure (Oxford, 1990:140). She also adds that the term affective refers to emotion, attitudes, motivation, and values (Oxford, 1990: 140). That statement get stronger and stronger when Wixon And Lipson cited in Kear & Michael (2003) state one of factors affecting reading performance is students' attitude her/himself toward reading. Then, on the

other hand, Richek, List, & Lerner (1983) cited in Roberts & Wilson (2006) reveal that reading attitude strongly determines the base of successful instruction.

In contrast to those two opinions above, the results of the 2001 Progress in International Reading Literacy Study declared that poor reading attitudes do not necessarily correlate with low achievement. It means students' low achievement in reading is not necessarily influenced by students' attitude. Attitude cannot be a surface to be indicated high achievement levels of ten-year olds in the United Kingdom. However, these same students had relatively poor attitudes toward reading when compared to other countries. Researchers have theorized that attitudes affect one's motivation and subsequent achievement by increasing the amount of time learners engage in reading (McKenna, Kear, & Ellsworth, 1990; Richek, List, & Lerner, 1989). Evidence has linked reading attitude with ability and reported that poor readers generally have more negative attitudes than better readers (Parker & Paradis, 1986).

Other studies have shown consistent attitudes toward reading regardless of ability (Lazarus & Callahan, 2000). A study by McKenna and Kear (1990) found that students' attitudes toward academic and recreational reading steadily declined across the elementary school years. This study showed a sharp decline in low-ability students' attitudes across grade levels. Gifted students tend to have different perceptions and attitudes toward reading. The reading attitudes of gifted students had been researched by Martin (1984). It indicated that gifted students have negative attitudes toward reading. These students found most school-related material to be boring and preferred spending their time in other ways.

Studies with large populations can sometimes give a more detailed analysis and insight into attitudes of students toward reading. A 1990 study completed by McKenna, Kear, and Ellsworth is the most comprehensive study completed on the reading attitudes of elementary students. The study used a national sample of over 18,000 students in grades one through six. The study found that attitudes declined

throughout the elementary years due to social factors and expectations.

Beers (2003) also states students with a positive attitude toward reading see reading as a way to connect personally with a text. These students as the readers want to choose their own books, become familiar with authors, go to the library, keep reading journals, and have small group discussions. They define reading as "a way to go to new places", a way to be in another world', or something that creates a movie in mind' in other words, the students who have positive attitude toward reading see reading as an interesting activity. They really enjoy it. They also believe that reading is a way to get much useful information that they need to enrich their knowledge.

Beers (2003) also adds students with a negative attitude toward reading define reading very differently. They say that reading is "calling words", saying words', or just word on page. These readers still want to choose their own books, but from narrow field. They do not know the authors and do not know a library's layout. They see a library as "too big" and do not know where any of the good books are' so they need help in choosing books. The students who have negative attitudes toward reading see reading as a boring activity. They dislike reading.

The statement above sheds light on that there is relationship between students' attitude toward learning especially in reading and reading comprehension achievement. The existence of the impact between students' reading attitude and students' reading achievement is also blossoming by the notion of McKenna, Kear, and Ellsworth (1995) in Donaldson (2010:17), they claim that

It is logical that reading attitudes and achievement scores would have an impact on each other because they have found from their studies that the students with the highest achievement scores had higher reading attitudes in general and vice versa.

The relationship between reading attitude and reading achievement also can be seen in the study of Andriani (2005) entitled

“the correlation of students’ reading attitude, vocabulary mastery and reading comprehension achievement of public technical vocational school students in Palembang”. Her finding reveals correlation between students’ reading attitude and their reading comprehension achievement is 0.620. It means that there is strong enough correlation between both variables. And she adds that the better the students’ reading attitude and vocabulary mastery, the greater their reading comprehension achievement will be.

Then, similar finding which states that there is relationship between reading attitude and reading achievement shown in the study of Suri (2007) where the coefficient correlation between those variables was 0.589. It meant that there was strong enough correlation between both variables. Next, synonymous finding or study done by Sallabas (2008) entitled *Relationship between 8th Grade Secondary School Students’ Reading Attitudes and Reading Comprehension Skills* also reveals that there is a low level correlation between students’ reading comprehension skills and attitude towards reading and academic achievement.

**Method of Research**

In this research, The population of this study was the fourth-semester students of English study program of FKIP Muhammadiyah University Palembang. Population of this study was taken as the sample of research. From the number of population (211), there were only 170 students who came to fill out the questionnaire sheets and took reading comprehension test. Wallen and Fraenkle (1991:129) state that population is the group of interest to the researcher, the group to which the researcher would like to generalize the result of the study. The data were collected by distributing ready-made reading attitude questionnaires sheets consisting 25 items and designed by Tullock-Rhody, Regina and Alexander, J. Estill. 1980 cited in Andrian (2005), and testing the reading comprehension test for the fourth-semester English Program

students of FKIP Universitas Muhammadiyah Palembang.

Each item of statements had its ranged score based on likert scale labeled 0 to 4. Since the number of items in questionnaire is 25. The maximum score would be 125 and the minimum score would be 25. Student getting score below 3 was considered having negative attitude in this study and vice versa. This judgement was constructed by Kubiszyn and Borich (1993) to determine or judge students’ attitude in reading in this study (Table 1).

**Table 1.** The Scoring of Questionnaires for Reading Attitude

Positive statement	Scores	Negative statement
Strongly agree	5	Strongly disagree
Agree	4	Disagree
Undecided	3	Undecided
Disagree	2	Agree
Strongly disagree	1	Strongly agree

Source: Kubiszyn & Borich (1993:176)

Students’ reading score in this study was classified into two categories. They were negative and positive attitude. However, the scoring sytem used this following formula:

$$R. \text{ Attitude Score} = \frac{\text{Student's Reading Attitude Score}}{\dots}$$

**Reading Attitude Questionnaire Items**

The results of that division became the solution to decide students’ attitude toward reading. If the result of the division was greater than 3.0, it could be concluded that student exhibits a positive attitude toward reading (see table 2).

**Table 2.** The Classification System for Attitude Judgement

Score	Classification
< 30	Negative
>30	Positif

Source: Kubiszyn & Borich (1993:178)

A test is a method of measuring a person’s ability for knowledge in a given area (Brown, 1997: 219). The reading test materials were ready-made reading

comprehension test taken from SAT 2007, FCAT 2006, and TOEIC 2009.

Test was given to measure the students' reading comprehension achievement. In this reading test, the students read the texts and found the answers to the questions based on the text. The readability of the written texts had been analyzed by using Flesch Kincaid Method. It indicated the grade a person would have to be able to understand the text. For example level 13 means that a university student in the first and second semester would be able to understand the text (Readability Index Calculator, 2009).

For the sake of knowing students' achievement in reading comprehension, the reading tests choosing in this study were not only the written text for level 14 but also written text in which two levels below (12, 13) and two levels above (15,16) of the students.

There are seven aspects of question used to reflect students' comprehension as stated by Cooper et al (1988:32-48) cited in Rosmalina (2005). They are details, main idea, inference, cause and effect, reference, and sequence and question related to vocabulary. The reading comprehension test comprised 25 questions in form of multiple choices including aspect in the table of specification of reading comprehension test (Table 10). The instruments used in this study were ready-made test and ready made questionnaires. The items of SILL were used in this study which were adopted from Oxford (1990) and the items of questionnaire for reading attitude were adopted from Tullock-Rhody, Regina and Alexander, J. Estill. A "Scale for Assessing Attitudes toward Reading". *Journal of Reading* v.23, 609, April 1980 cited in Suri (2009). Since those questionnaire is ready-made test (questionnaire sheet for reading strategies and reading attitude) are considered valid and reliable to measure students' reading strategies and reading attitude. Meanwhile, the reading comprehension test was compiled or adapted from various sources. Then, to fulfill the standard of validity and reliability, reading comprehension test instrument used in this study was tried out and analyzed by using

pearson product moment coefficient correlation in SPSS version 17.

Reliability refers to the consistency of the information obtained (Fraenkel and Wallen, 1991:85). The reliability of a test concerns its precision as a measuring instrument (Cohen in Celce-Murcia (2001:525). Reliability asks whether a test given to the same respondents a second time would yield the same result. Wallen and Fraenkel (1991:99) for a research purpose, a rule of thumb is that reliability should be at least 0.70 and preferably higher. It means that the test will be reliable since it is higher 0.70 and can be used in real study.

### Findings

There were one criterion (dependent) variable (Y) and one predictor (independent) variables in this study. The criterion variable (Y) was students' reading comprehension achievement and the predictor variables was students' reading attitude (X). There were 170 students as the sample of study. Following table is summary of the distribution of descriptive analysis of two variables analysed by SPSS Program released 17 (see table 3).

**Table 3.** Summary of Descriptive Analysis

	R.Achievement	R.Attitude
Mean	49.22	92.62
Std. Deviation	18.812	9.419
Minimum	12	67
Maximum	84	122

From the descriptive statistics table above, it was found that the mean of reading comprehension achievement was 49.22. However the standard deviation of reading comprehension achievement was 18.812.

The frequency of students' reading comprehension achievement ranged from the lowest to highest score which is 12 to 84 where the minimum score of students' reading comprehension achievement was 12 and the maximum score of students' reading comprehension was 84. Out of 170 students, there were 3 students (1.8%) getting lowest score (12) and 5 students (2.9%) getting the highest score (84). The majority of

students' reading comprehension achievements was 44. In other words, there were 19 students (11.2%) out of 170 students getting score in that range.

The rest of students' RCA was between 80 to 48 or there were 83 students (48.8%) and between 40 to 16 or it has 60 students (almost 35.2%). The specific distribution of students' reading comprehension achievements can be shown in table 15. The distribution of students' reading comprehension achievements was varied but it could be considered having normal distribution if it was noticed based on histogram showing in figure 1.

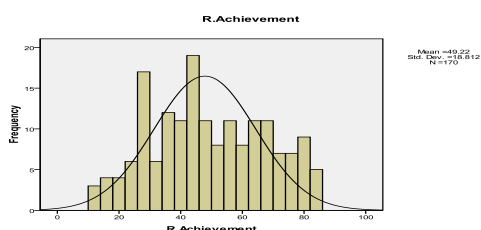


Figure 1. Histogram Graphic of RCA (Y)

From the findings, it was found that there was no student getting excellent score, 21 out of 170 students getting good score, or it is only 12.% from the total number of population, 48 out of 170 students (28.3%) getting average score category, and 59.4 % (101 students) getting poor score.

Based on the analysis of the descriptive statistic data for reading attitude, it was found that the minimum score for students' reading attitude was 67 . Meanwhile, the maximum score was 122. Then, the mean/ average of students' reading attitude score was 92.62 with standard deviation of 9.419.

From frequency analysis data, it indicated that there were only one student (0.6%) getting the lowest score which is 67 and one student (0.6%) getting the highest score which is 122 in this study. The majority score of students' reading attitude was 90 where there were 14 students (8.2%) out of 170 students having that number and it was followed by score 65 belonging to 13 students (7.6%). For further information related to the frequency

of students' reading attitude can be seen in Appendix 9.

From the frequency table of reading attitude , it could be drawn a perception that only 5 students (1.2%) from the total population had score which is lower than 70 and the rest of population which was 98.8% having score which is higher than 70 attitude toward reading. From the Table 20, it can be seen that there are four indicators having high mean score, they are items number 7 (8.05), 13 (8.01), 19 (8.47), 24 (8.26) . From those items, this study inferred that students having highly positive reading attitude in these indicators. It indicated that students love reading in purpose of enhancing their lexical knowledge and they claimed that reading was not a boring. The distribution of students' reading attitude score can be seen in form of Histogram in figure 2.

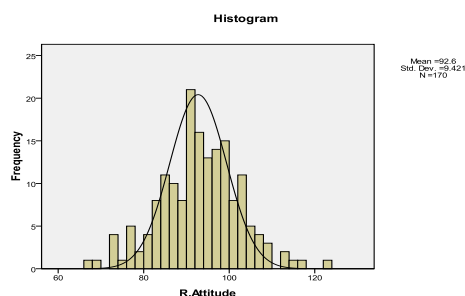


Figure 2. Histogram of Student's Attitude

**Table 4.** The summary of X and Y

CORRELATION	R	R <sup>2</sup>	p	Status
R.Attitude and RCA	-.054	.003	.486	Very Weak

it was found that the correlation of students' reading attitude and reading comprehension achievement was -0.054 with level of significance 0.486. it indicates that there was a very weak correlation between these variables.

From the table above R values was 0.054. It means there was a very weak correlation between reading attitude and reading comprehension achievement and has negative linear correlation. Since R square was 0.003 it means 0.03 % of the students' reading comprehension achievement was associated with or could be explained by the reading attitude variable. Thus, 99.7% of

reading comprehension achievement might be influenced or explained by other factors/variables.

**Table 5.** Regression Analysis of Reading Attitude (X) and Reading Comp Achievement(Y)

		Unstandardized		Standar	T	Sig.
		Coefficients				
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	59.179	14.318		4.133	.000
	R.Attitude	-.108	.154	-.054	-.699	.486

a. Dependent Variable: R.Achievement

Table above shows that  $\hat{Y} = 59.179 + 0.108 X + e$  where

1. Constant in number 59.179 indicated that if there had been no reading attitude, students' reading comprehension achievement would have been 59.179.
2. Coefficient regression X in number 0.108 indicated that every one additional point of students' reading strategies would improve 0.108 point for students' reading comprehension achievement or in other words, reading strategies negative lineally had some influences or contributions on students' reading comprehension achievements to amount to 10.8%. It means reading attitude had small influence on their achievement in reading comprehension.

The finding could be interpreted that there was a weak relationship between students' reading attitude and their achievement although descriptive data of reading attitude result showed that the students love reading because they can enhance their vocabulary in English and

they claimed that reading is not boring activity (from items of number 7, 13, 19, 24) in reading attitude questionnaire).

Although the students love reading and regard reading is not boring activity, there was a world of difference from students' opinions in which captured from their response toward indicator number 1 (40.6%) and 10 (71%). There was only 18.3% out of 170 students who like wasting time just for reading and the result of indicators in reading attitude questionnaire number 1 also showed there was only 1.8% out of 170 students who strongly agreed that they preferred reading to doing another activity

Therefore, If it is shown from the result of students' response related to attitude, this study claims that the low correlation happened might be due to the lack of reading practices of the students or they did not read a lot although they love reading.

In line with the problem of this study, it was found that out of the 170 students, only twenty one students (12.3%) having good achievement in reading comprehension and twenty out of that number found that they had positive attitude in reading, nonetheless, one student still had negative attitude although she had good achievement in reading. Thus, this study advocates the finding of McKenna et al (1995) cited in Donalson (2010) who found that students with the highest scores had higher reading attitude.

Then, the findings) also showed that about 97.1% of 170 students having positive attitude but about 59.4% of the samples still found having poor achievement in reading. This finding was highly contrasted to the notion of Wixon and Lipson cited in Kear (1990:626) which state that students' attitude toward reading is a central factor affecting reading performance. In other words, there is no wonder if R square value between  $X_2$  and Y shows very small contribution (0.03%) since the number of students getting low score with high attitude score is higher than students having good achievement in reading comprehension with high reading attitude score.

Therefore, findings related to attitude and achievement in this study



indicated that having positive attitude in reading was not guarantee that students had good achievement in reading comprehension but most of students getting good achievement in reading, indeed, had positive attitude in reading.

A huge discrepancy of students' response from one indicator item to another item in questionnaire distributed which was actually related to each other made the researcher of this study assume that students didn't tell the truth about their attitude toward reading or students' reading comprehension can be improved as long as students provide themselves with the background knowledge about language skills since it was found that most of their TOEFL score was still low (< 450) and motivate themselves to seek reading practice opportunity because it was found that about 70% of them was rare to do that opportunity.

Thus, it is assumed that a weak correlation between reading attitude on their achievement was caused from the internal factor of personal learner as a reader or it might be untruthfulness of the students' responses when filling out the questionnaire and the limitation of their second language foundation and their reluctancy in doing more reading.

### Conclusions

Based on the result of the study and the discussion, two conclusions can be drawn. First, reading attitude had a weak correlation toward reading comprehension achievement. Second, Reading attitude had small contribution toward students' achievement in reading.

The affective side of the learners (attitude) is considered as one of the fundamental factors that promotes and probably has big influences on language learning success or failure (Oxford, 1990). Two of them can work well or be used in line with the students' need and depend much on the individual language development, schematic or experiential background, situation of the students' reading environment. Students should have enough proficiency to comprehend reading text.

Moreover, reading comprehension skill might be developed if students want to

seek reading practice opportunity to devices themselves to develop their language skill. Where it found that it was highly related to students' affective side (Oxford:1990).

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