

THE CONTRIBUTION OF STUDENTS' LANGUAGE ATTITUDE TOWARD THE SUCCESS OF ENGLISH LEARNING IN AN INDONESIAN ISLAMIC BOARDING SCHOOL

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ABSTRACT

Students' language attitude is one aspect that contributes to the output of learning (Garret, 2010). The study aims to investigate the contribution of students' language attitudes towards the success of English learning. The research setting is in an Islamic boarding school in Indonesia. Under a qualitative research method and case study design, interviews are conducted with students to collect data. The data are descriptively analyzed using thematic analysis. The finding reveals that students with a positive attitude towards English have high motivation to learn English, and vice versa. The success of learning English is indicated by higher English scores and academic achievements, such as winning English competitions. Therefore, the study suggests that teachers should build students' positive attitudes towards English to facilitate successful English learning.

Keywords: English learning; Islamic boarding school; language attitude

ABSTRAK

Sikap bahasa siswa merupakan salah satu aspek yang berkontribusi terhadap hasil pembelajaran (Garret, 2010). Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menyelidiki kontribusi sikap bahasa siswa terhadap keberhasilan pembelajaran bahasa Inggris. Latar penelitian dilakukan di sebuah pesantren di Indonesia. Dengan metode penelitian kualitatif dan desain studi kasus, wawancara siswa dilakukan untuk mengumpulkan data. Data dianalisis secara deskriptif dengan menggunakan analisis tematik. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa siswa yang memiliki sikap positif terhadap bahasa Inggris memiliki motivasi yang tinggi untuk belajar bahasa Inggris dan sebaliknya. Keberhasilan belajar bahasa Inggris ditunjukkan dengan nilai bahasa Inggris yang lebih tinggi dan prestasi akademik, seperti memenangkan kompetisi bahasa Inggris. Oleh karena itu, penelitian ini menyarankan agar para guru membangun sikap positif siswa terhadap bahasa Inggris untuk mendapatkan pembelajaran bahasa Inggris yang sukses.

Kata Kunci: pembelajaran bahasa Inggris; pondok pesantren; sikap bahasa

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INTRODUCTION

In an increasingly interconnected world, the English language has emerged as a global lingua franca, transcending borders and cultures to become a unifying force in communication. With over 1.5 billion speakers worldwide, it holds the status of the most widely spoken second language and is often considered the language of international business, diplomacy, and academia (Getie, 2020). However, beyond its practical utility, the English language also carries a complex consideration of attitudes, perceptions, and socio-cultural connotations that shape the way it is both revered and debated (Garrett, 2010). Understanding and addressing these attitudes is crucial for educators and learners to create a positive and effective learning environment for the English language (Imsa-Ard, 2020). Therefore, the attitude toward language plays a pivotal role in the educational context, particularly in learning English, as it fosters motivation, a crucial aspect of successful learning.

Attitudes toward English language learning are a complex interplay of motivation, challenges, cultural perceptions, social influences, pedagogical approaches, and personal identity (Khasanah et al., 2024; McKenzie, 2010). In the context of learning English as a foreign language (EFL), attitudes play a crucial role in shaping a learner's orientation towards language goals. It is also important to note that a negative attitude can obstruct the process of language acquisition (Getie, 2020). Özer and Yetkin (2022) claimed that a negative attitude toward English among students is one of the antecedents of language anxiety, and they suggest that teachers maintain students' positive attitudes in order to overcome the anxiety. Indeed, Baykara and ATAÇ (2021) argued that positive attitudes of foreign students contribute to their language learning process by minimizing their anxiety, particularly while speaking English. Thus, language attitude offers a significant contribution to creating a successful learning process.

Successful language learning can be defined in various ways, as it depends on individual goals, needs, and perspectives. While Griffiths (2018) states the successful students are those who pass the exam or achieve the qualification, in the learning process it tends to learners who actively use language learning strategies which can improve their language learning effectiveness which then encourages the expansion of strategies, creating a self-reinforcing cycle of more effective learning, similar to a tornado effect (Rahman & Wahyudi, 2015). Similar to the goal-setting theory by Locke and Latham (1991), which sets clear and achievable goals for the English learning journey, having well-defined objectives provides direction and motivation. Moreover, considering the needs and intentions of learners in the context of educational change is crucial to ensure that instruction is tailored to meet their specific requirements and goals (Orfan, 2020).

There is a considerable amount of research about language attitude, one of which is the investigation of attitude toward English language learning among students in Asian countries (Imsa-Ard, 2020; Somblingo & Alieto, 2020; Suwartono & Stapa, 2022). Furthermore, some factors that influence students' attitudes toward learning English have been studied by Getie (2020). Further research has also been conducted by examining the relationship between language attitude and English language learning strategies, language achievement (Habók et al., 2022), and language awareness (Harsanti & Nasanius, 2023). While in the Islamic boarding school context, the previous studies discuss the challenges faced by teachers, which primarily consist of external factors (Sabiq et al, 2022). Astrid et al. (2020) investigated the students' attitudes toward some aspects of English, including native speakers. However, the current study aims to determine the contribution of students' language attitudes to the success of English learning.

Language attitude is the term used to describe how someone feels, thinks, and perceives a particular language or languages. Garrett (2010, p. 2) stated that language attitudes are occasionally unconscious; however, they are frequently noticeable when they are negative or well expressed. Those varied language expressions have social implications, eliciting various attitudinal responses and possibly resulting in social advantage or disadvantage. This attitude serves as a barometer

of favorability and unfavorability, or how much we approve or disapprove of the attitude object. This positive-to-negative attitude directionality is frequently supplemented with an estimate of intensity (Garrett, 2010, p. 24). In addition, behaviorist theory views attitude as a behavioral unit that can be inferred from an individual's responses in a social context, while the Mentalist theory recognizes the complexity of human beings and explains why an individual may hold ambivalent attitudes (McKenzie, 2010).

Many language scholars believe that motivation and attitudes are two characteristics that draw their attention; moreover, motivation has been a popular research variable in the context of language learning (Suwartono & Stapa, 2022). Shinge and Kotabagi (2021) and Khansa (2020) find that students' attitudes and motivation towards the English language have a significant impact on their proficiency levels, indicating that students are highly motivated to improve their English language skills and have shown a 100% inclination towards improvement during the semester. Getie (2020) examines the elements that influence high school students' attitudes about learning English as a foreign language. She believes that learning these characteristics may help pupils adjust to diverse settings and achieve greater levels in various areas.

A positive attitude toward learning is essential for success since it minimizes linguistic anxiety. Furthermore, in the Islamic boarding school context, students' religious learning experiences in the pesantren shape their English beliefs, which, by holding moderate Islamic views, encourage them to develop a positive attitude toward the English language (Sabiq et al., 2022). Fitri et al. (2022) believed that positive language attitude is important for successful language learning, while negative attitude leads to lack of motivation and desire to learn English, English students are expected to have a positive attitude towards English due to the importance of English in their field of study, they considered three components of language attitude: cognitive, affective, and conative to be investigated.

Language attitudes can impact various aspects of the students' learning process. Yuan et al. (2023) employed Gardner's theory of motivation to investigate students' attitudes toward English, as learners' attitudes toward learning the target language are believed to affect their motivation and, subsequently, their academic achievement. Similarly, Alamer and Lee (2019) emphasized the importance of understanding the role of motivation in second language (L2) learning. They suggested that when learners feel satisfaction in the language learning process, they are more likely to be motivated. Numerous motivating elements, such as the fulfilment of basic psychological needs, goal-setting orientation, and emotions in learning, may impact reaching desired outcomes in language acquisition. Additionally, Astrid et al. (2020) argue that students with a positive attitude become cognitively engaged when the teacher invites them to explore new concepts, explain their reasoning, defend their conclusions, or explore alternative tactics and answers.

Successful English learning can be defined by various indicators that demonstrate proficiency, comprehension, and effective communication in the English language. Griffiths (2018) explains that the hypothesis that success in language development is linked to how students approach the task is, in itself, insufficient to guarantee successful learning when studying in a target language environment. While Farrell and Jacobs (2016) state diversity in communicative language teaching which considers as successful language learning strategies as a natural result of the variety of circumstances in which second language acquisition occurs (Khoirunnisa & Widiati, 2021), as well as the variety of experiences that students, teachers, and other stakeholders bring with them. The successful language learning is indicated by excellent academic achievement, as examined by Shan (2020), who found that intrinsic motivation plays a pivotal role in the learning process. Those with high intrinsic motivation achieved higher grades than those without it. Similarly, Mantiri (2015) revealed that achieving academic realisation is a measure of a successful learner, which is likely reassured by both extrinsic and intrinsic dimensions of motivation.

Successful English learning involves several key aspects to consider in the process. Meşe and Sevilen (2021) examined motivational factors in successful English teaching. Students reported higher levels of motivation as a result of receiving positive teacher feedback and adequate communication with teachers, which helps keep them motivated to pursue their goals of second language learning. Moreover, positive emotions in language instruction and learning can make the experience more enjoyable, meaningful, and aid in resilience (Mudiono et al., 2023), hence, Consideration of individuals' well-being, focusing on strengths and good emotions, and promoting positive emotions in the language learning process all contribute to successful learning (Wang et al., 2021). Ilina (2019) calculated successful language learning by considering the integration of foreign language elements, communicative situations, and authentic texts to develop students' communicative skills and cognitive abilities in the English language. The importance of motivation and the development of communicative culture are also emphasized in achieving successful learning outcomes.

The measurement of successful English learning is various, Gultom and Oktaviani (2022) stated that successful learning refers to the acquisition and mastery of the English language, the achievement of a high level of English language proficiency, which can be influenced by factors such as self-esteem, motivation, attitudes toward the language, and the learning situation. Meanwhile, Zha and Liu (2023) believed that successful English learning refers to the proficiency and effectiveness in acquiring and using the English language successful learners use various learning strategies, such as metacognitive, cognitive, affective, and social strategies, to comprehend and learn English comprehensively in whole contexts. The emphasis on self-management strategies, such as learning awareness, planning, time management, attention, and autonomous learning, suggests that successful English learning involves taking responsibility for one's learning process and effectively managing one's learning activities. Ultimately, successful English learning aims to improve language performance, accomplish language tasks, and enhance long-term proficiency in the English language.

In a similar manner, this research is trying to examine 1. How do Islamic boarding school students in Indonesia feel, think, and behave towards English? 2. How do students' language attitudes toward English contribute to their success or failure in learning the language?

METHOD

Research design

Regarding the research objectives, which aim to investigate the English language attitude of Islamic boarding school students and its contribution to successful English learning, this study employs a case study research design using a qualitative approach. The case study is suitable because it is an intensive study of a single unit to understand a larger class of (similar) units (Gerring, 2004).

Research site and participants

The participants of this study were nine senior high school students in an Islamic boarding school in Jombang, Indonesia. The students' criteria are those who are learning English as a foreign language, with high, medium, and low levels of English proficiency. Each level, from tenth grade to twelfth grade, consists of 3 students with different ages: 16, 17, and 18 years old, respectively. They all had similar prior academic backgrounds in Islamic boarding schools in different places. The interview was conducted in their Islamic boarding school out of school hours.

Data collection and analysis

Data were collected through semi-structured interviews, with a questionnaire that related to the (Garrett, 2010), which mentions attitudes have often been talked about in terms of three components: cognition, affect and behavior. The interviews are used to gather qualitative information, providing an in-depth understanding of students' attitudes, perceptions, and experiences (Ratnadewi et

al., 2020). Therefore, the case study research question of this study focuses on understanding the language attitudes of Islamic boarding school students towards English and the factors that contribute to their success or failure in learning the language. The data collected from the interviews and discussions are analyzed using thematic analysis by Braun and Clarke (2006). The analysis involved familiarizing with collected data then generating initial codes which are driven by theory of language attitude, searching for themes of a whole collected data, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and finally producing the report to provide a comprehensive understanding of the attitudes of students towards English language learning (Xu & Zammit, 2020).

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

The results of the interview indicate that some students have both positive and negative responses, which are divided into three essential aspects of language attitude including cognition, affect and behavior. However, they hold different opinions and experiences, which reflect their varying attitudes toward the English language. This is then connected to their academic achievement, including excellent final scores or winning an English competition. The students are systematically interviewed based on their level of English proficiency from 1 to 9. First, second and third students are at a high level. Fourth, fifth, and sixth are at the medium level, whereas the last three students are at the low level of proficiency. The data are shown below.

Students' Attitude toward English

Table 1. Code of the data

Code	Sample of Excerpts
Cognition	“It’s important for all Indonesians to learn English because nowadays many job interviews use a foreign language or English” “It’s important to learn English, because English is an international language” “It’s important to learn English because the trend right now is to use the English language”
Affect	“It’s essential for the government to recognize English as a formal language” “It’s not necessary for the government to allow people to speak English”
Behaviour	“I’m not going to use English fully in my everyday life, maybe just fifty-fifty” “Always opposed the use of English in everyday life”

From the answer statements, as well as the example, it can be concluded that both positive and negative attitudes reflect different patterns, which are then categorised into different codes.

Cognition

Cognition is defined as beliefs about the world and the relationships between objects of social significance. This aspect encompasses students’ beliefs about the English language and its connection to social significance. All students share the same belief that English is essential to learn; however, they have slight differences in their reasons for learning it. Most of them argue that it is important because English is a global language.

“It’s important to learn English, because English is an international language” (student 3)

While the other students believe that it is important to learn English because of their future direction and job considerations.

“It’s important for all Indonesians to learn English because nowadays many job interviews use a foreign language or English” (students 4)

"In my opinion, English is important.... In the future, I want to study actually in Oxford LSPR Cambridge, where the colloquial language is their English..." (student 1)

Lastly, there is a student who believes that the importance of learning English is because the English language is a trend that is used in recent times.

"It's important to learn English because the trend right now is to use the English language" (student 9).

Affect

The affect is defined as feelings about the attitude object, barometer of favourability and unfavourability, while in this research, this aspect consists of students' feelings about favorable and unfavorable aspects of English and how they agree and disagree about English language consideration in Indonesia, they tend to have different opinions. Some of them agree on how English is recognized by the government and allowed to be spoken in the public interest.

"It's essential for the government to recognize English as a formal language" (student 1)

While other students disagree on how English is considered and recognize in the government policy.

"The government doesn't need to allow people to speak English" (student 8)

Behaviour

The last aspect behavior is defined as the predisposition to act in specific ways to be consistent with cognitive and affective judgments, which means how students behave in the English language, which shows their consistency with cognitive and affective judgments. However, most students have inconsistent behavior; some of them hold positive opinions and beliefs, but they do not act positively.

"I'm not going to use English fully in my everyday life, maybe just fifty-fifty" (student 1)

Nevertheless, other students consistently exhibit positive feelings, thoughts, and behaviours toward the English language.

"It's going to be a great opportunity for older people so they can learn English" (student 4)

Table 2. Theme of the code

Data extract	Themes
"It's important to learn English, because English is an international language"	Valuable
"... because nowadays many job interviews use a foreign language or English"	Futuristic
"It's essential to learn English from childhood"	
"It's going to be a great opportunity for older people so they can learn English"	Optimistic
"It's essential for the government to recognize English as a formal language"	Acceptable
"It's important to learn English because the trend right now is to use the English language"	Influential
"I'm not going to use English fully in my everyday life, maybe just fifty-fifty"	Uncertain
"It's not necessary for the government to allow people to speak English"	Unfavourability
"Always opposed the use of English in everyday life"	Denial
"It wasn't a pivotal thing for those older to start learn English"	Undervalued

The theme is the specific classification after the code; their opinions about the English language show similarities, which are evident in the word choices they use in their statements. The first theme, "valuable," explains the importance of learning English in the world, in their opinion. The

next theme, futuristic, suggests that they have goals for learning English to advance their future career and lives. The optimistic theme shows students' confidence and hope in English language education for all people. An acceptable theme explains students' acknowledgment of the existence, validity, or legality of English in Indonesia. An influential theme signifies students' belief that English plays a part in what is commonly used by many people in recent times. Moreover, the uncertain theme refers to students' inconsistency and indecision about the use of the English language. Unfavourability denotes students' expression or showing a lack of approval or support. While the denial theme exemplifies students' failure to acknowledge and admit English into their consciousness. The last theme, undervalued, is associated with a negative attitude, which indicates a lack of awareness about the English position.

All those themes lead to the understanding of positive and negative attitudes, which are classified as follows:

Table 3. Theme classification	
Themes	Classification
Valuable	Positive
Futuristic	
Optimistic	
Acceptable	
Influential	
Uncertain	Negative
Unfavorably	
Denial	
Undervalued	

The provided data simply displays how the nine students, as participants, answered the interview question and attempts to portray their attitudes toward the English language. Some students consistently have a very positive outlook on the English language, including some themes valuable, futuristic, optimistic, acceptable, and influential, which are then established as the positive attitude and some of them just combine between positive and negative views with different frequency as well including uncertain, unfavorability, denial and undervalued.

The Contribution of Attitude toward Successful Learning

Relating to academic achievement, their attitude unexpectedly plays a pivotal role. Those students with high-level English proficiency, as evidenced by their high scores, also tend to excel in and participate in English competitions, such as Olympiads, speeches, and storytelling, and have a positive attitude toward the English language.

“My last English score was 95, I once took part in a storytelling competition and won 1st place in the district and got bronze in the Genius Olympiad” (student 1)

“My school report score is 90, when it comes to competitions, yes, I have participated in several competitions and won several” (student 2)

Whereas those who hold more negative views of the English language tend to have a lower level of English proficiency, whether in academic scores or by never participating in the competition.

“My English score is 75” (student 8)

“I'm not sure, it's around 75” (student 9)

Thus, having a positive attitude towards the English language is a significant consideration for students, especially in Islamic boarding schools, to conduct successful English learning. Since their language attitudes encourage them to be more active and engage in the learning process, it is a crucial aspect that deals with academic goals and the successful learning process.

Discussion

The pivotal role in successful English learning that is taken by students' attitude toward the English language in this study is in line with the research by Fitri et al. (2022), which also proves that a lack of enthusiasm to study English is one of the reasons they develop a negative language attitude toward English. It indicates that students' attitudes have a significant effect on their performance in learning English. Moreover, Habók et al. (2022) found that even at the beginner/elementary level, strategy use can have an impact on language acquisition, and a student's attitude is a key predictor and mediator of the relationship between strategies and language achievement.

Although the research by Suwartono and Stapa (2022) confirms the remarkable correlation between language attitudes and successful learning, it reveals different reasons for the attitudes of Indonesians and Malaysians. As the English language takes a different place in those countries, one as a second language and the other as a foreign language, hence Malaysians tended to favor the target culture, whereas Indonesians tended to be native speaker-oriented. It was similar to the collected data of this study, in which most of the interviewees had a positive attitude by considering English as an international language and recognizing the relationship between English and social significance, such as having a job.

Futuristic idea that is conveyed in some students' thoughts which refers English usefulness prospects in the future for getting a job or even getting in the university is similar with Astrid et al. (2020) which found that one of influential factor of attitude is getting a job, in their finding students felt that learning English was important to them because they thought they can get a job what they desire. Moreover, related to cognition aspect which talk about to beliefs about the world, and the relationships between objects of social significance, Getie (2020) stated that the goal of language acquisition is more utilitarian, such as meeting school or university graduation requirements, applying for a job, asking greater compensation based on language skills, reading technical information, translating work, or gaining higher social status.

By those finding, in which the students combine their opinion on positive and negative in all three considered components of attitude is supported by Yuan et al. (2023) which stated that the students were typically motivated and had positive attitudes toward English, however, it does not mean that students can stay positive and motivated despite their shifting learning experiences. Additionally, Shinge and Kotabagi (2021) argue that the modules of English language skills courses should be precisely planned, taking into account emotional factors such as students' attitudes and motivations toward the English language. This will make the classroom setting more conducive to students effortlessly acquiring the language.

In contrast with Sabiq et al. (2022) who assumed that students' ethnoreligious upbringing and educational experiences impacted their attitudes towards English and its study which make they held moderate Islamic beliefs that learning English does not show a similar faith to non-believers, this study did not find any religious background that particularly influences students' attitudes toward English. Instead, some students demonstrate great integrity with English, considering it an international language and essential to learn. This aligns with Astrid et al. (2020), who stated that some students may perceive learning English as difficult, which can lead to the development of negative attitudes toward the language.

Students often exhibit negative attitudes and a lack of motivation to learn English, which can lead to low proficiency and limited achievement in the English language field. In contrast, those who have a positive attitude tend to generate strong motivation to learn English, successfully

achieving their learning goals by earning a great score or attaining notable academic achievements. These results align with those of Shinge and Kotabagi (2021), who argue that students' motivation and attitude towards English have a significant impact on their proficiency levels. Furthermore, Imsa-Ard (2020) supported this result by arguing that understanding and addressing these attitudes are crucial for educators and learners to create a positive and effective English language learning environment, thereby motivating EFL students to study and improve their English.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

Purposing to investigate how students' language attitudes contribute to their successful English learning, this research finds that there are considerable impacts. Students think, feel, and behave toward language, which affects their motivation to learn English and ultimately leads to successful English Learning. Students with a more positive attitude towards the English language, considering it valuable, futuristic, acceptable, and influential, tend to achieve higher scores and numerous academic achievements, such as winning competitions. On the other hand, those who have a less positive attitude or tend to be negative, including uncertainty, unfavourability, denial, and undervaluing English, receive a lower score and exhibit no academic achievement. This suggests that language attitude is essential to consider when creating successful language learning. Thus, teachers are advised to help their students develop a positive attitude. For further research, it is recommended to investigate the broader aspect of how English teachers can support their students in developing a positive attitude toward the English language during the learning process.

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