

## The Attitudes Towards English as a Foreign Language: A Survey of Some Students at MAN 1 Batanghari

Siti Kholipah<sup>1\*</sup>, Ahmad Syauqi Harsyah<sup>2</sup>, Amri Ikhsan<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1,2,3</sup>Universitas Jambi, Jl. Jambi - Muara Bulian No.KM. 15, Mendalo Darat, Kec. Jambi Luar Kota, Kabupaten Muaro Jambi, Jambi, Indonesia

### Abstract

*This study investigated students' attitudes towards language and English language learning at Islamic senior high schools (Madrasah Aliyah Negeri) 1 Batanghari. This research is part of survey research. Survey study is designed to provide a quantitative or numeric description of trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population (Creswell, 2012). The data were collected from questionnaires and focus group interviews. There were 120 students of the 2022-2023 academic year. The students showed positive attitudes as there was a 3.6684 total mean score gained by 120 students toward two variables presented. The interview findings revealed that the students' positive attitude may be caused by their motivation, instrumental and integrative. Teachers should respect and carefully investigate students' feelings, beliefs, needs, and behaviors before designing English courses to maintain positive attitudes toward English and English language learning. Overall, the students showed a positive attitude towards English. The questionnaire's results also showed that respondents recognized English's relevance in this time period. These are shown by their feeling, beliefs, or activities towards English.*

**Keywords:** Attitude, English, Survey

### 1. Introduction

Attitude is one of the main factors that can enhance the students' achievement in learning. Attitude is a behavior pattern that people have, such as feelings or responses toward a person, object, or problem (Kurniawan & Susanti, 2018).

Attitudes is a concept that helps in understanding human behavior (Ahmadi, 2009, p.150). There are three components of attitude; they are affective, behavioral, and cognitive. Affective is about the influential feelings and emotions of foreign language learners to like or dislike the objects. Behavior is about the way students behave and react in particular situations, especially when learning English. Cognitive is about the beliefs of the language learners about the knowledge that they receive and their understanding of the process of language learning. We can say that attitude is the tendency to act with respect to a particular object.

The concern of attitude is related to a predisposition or intention to behave in a certain way.

The way someone looks at an object. For example, a person with a positive attitude toward the language may send their child to an immersion school or may take evening language classes to advance their knowledge of language.

Attitude towards two elements: cognitive and affective. Thus, it is suggested that the instructor apply the Internet as a medium for teaching English in the classroom. Teachers need to be capable of managing the study room and take manipulating the students during the use of the internet. (Mesi Oktavia, Reflinda, Absharini Kardena, 2020).

To conclude that attitude relates to opinions towards various aspects and objects, for example, an opinion towards English as a foreign language. It is a set of beliefs, the knowledge about a language, and the people that speak that language.

### Language Attitude

In the learning process, attitude plays a very crucial role since it can influence success or failure. Language attitude is a form of view or assessment of a community group on the language they learn. Language attitudes are mental positions or feelings towards one's own language or the language of others (Kridalaksana: 2001).

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<sup>\*</sup>) Corresponding author

E-mail: sitikholidahjmb@gmail.com

Language attitude is an important factor in supporting the success of learning a second language. Its attitudes usually extend to two poles, which are positive and negative. Regarding the issue of this, Kamaruddin (1992: 39) argues that when a person is objective about an attitude, they will help the object. However, if a person behaves negatively toward an object, they will neglect, stay away from, reject, even damage the object. 66

Similarly, an attitude towards language can be positive and negative. Thus, if his attitude towards a language is positive, the learner will show the attitude and positive behavior, including the foreign language s/he learned. Similarly, if the attitude of the learners is negative, it is hard for a teacher to invite the students to be serious about studying the language.

Attitude is considered as an important factor maintaining students to learn a language. Attitudes are essential because they provide a great impact for students in the classroom. It means that learning and attitudes have a relation so that they can influence students' learning process (Carnduff and Reid, 2003, p.33). Many researches show that attitude is acknowledged as one of the most important factors that impact on learning language (Fakeye, 2010, p.206). In this case, attitude is seen as how students look at a language, and what students feel in learning a language. Attitude will make the students enjoyable or not in the classroom.

#### **Types of Students' Attitudes**

There are two types of attitudes that can affect students' learning. They are positive attitudes and negative attitudes. First, positive attitudes, Kara (2009, p.102) mentioned that positive attitudes guide students to positive behaviors toward their course of learning by joining the course actively and motivating them to learn seriously. These kinds of students are excited to solve their problems, get new information, use their own skills in daily life, and keep in course emotionally (as cited in Abidin et al., 2012).

In the classroom, they show a higher desire to learn, actively participate in classroom activities, and do what their teacher asks them to do. They will be sad when the teacher does not come; they will prepare the learning material, they buy the books used by themselves, etc.

Second, negative attitudes, Tchekepassi (2013, p.13) said that negative attitudes can be said as poor attitudes or unfavorable attitudes. It leads someone to do negative behavior toward some objects. These attitudes may lead to resistance, conflict, or discrimination towards their object. The classroom interaction, they are not enthusiastic about performing, they will be happy when it is no class, and they will be disappointed when their teacher is diligent to come to teach. It is not interested for them

to buy books. In other words, their desire to learn is just to come and present in the class. In the classroom, we can not claim all students have a positive or negative attitude; the teachers will face two kinds of attitudes. The teacher must provide a different treatment to them. S/he should react in a different way in communicating with them. If not, the learning outcome will fail to achieve.

#### **Assessments of Students' Attitudes**

Ahmadi (2009, p.152) states that attitude is a concept that helps in understanding human behavior. Travers, Gagne, and Cronbach agree that attitude involves three components that interact with the object. In this case, we can assess the attitude to identify the students' point of view of the language learned. A cognitive component is related to knowledge, beliefs, or thoughts that are based on information associated with the object. For example, "I believe learning English will help me trip around the world" (Pickens, 2005, p. 44).

The affective component refers to the emotional factors of attitudes. Here the object is perceived as comfortable or uncomfortable. For example, if someone says that they are happy in learning the language, these describe their feelings toward the language. This is emphasized by Feng and Chen (2009) that the learning process is an emotional process that influences students' perspectives and attitudes toward the learning process. An example of an affective component is "I like learning English" (Pickens, 2005, p.44).

The behavior component is associated with one predisposition to act towards the object. For example, because mastering a foreign language is important, people like it, and they are trying to provide more time to study. In this component, Kara (2009) agreed that positive behavior will lead positive attitude. An example of a behavioral component is "I like to learn English and will join an English class" (Pickens, 2005, p.44).

Factors that Influence Students' Attitudes toward Learning English There are some factors that can influence students' attitudes toward learning English. Teachers show a good personality, speak politely, have a attention to students, help students in learning actually have promoted a positive attitude to students. Azwar (1988, p.30) states there are some factors that influence attitude, namely: personal experience, influence of others that are considered important, the influence of culture, the mass media, institutes of education and religious institutions, and emotional factors. It can be the basis for the formation of attitudes; personal experience should leave a strong impression. It is believed that such a performance. Bartram (2010, p.65) stated that a teacher can influence learners' attitudes. What the

teacher does, explains, behaves, they speak in the classroom, the tasks presented, and the evaluation they do will have an impact on the student's attitude. In other words, the teacher's attitude in the classroom interaction will be 'judged' by his/her students.

The students feel that they are 'comfortable' with the teacher's performance; they enjoy learning and have a positive attitude. Conversely, they are uncomfortable, and it is hard for the teacher to involve them in classroom interaction. In this case, we can say learners view a teacher as an agent or a person who has roles in forming their attitudes (Bartram, 2010). The teacher's behavior also influences their relationship. It means different learning practices and strategies from the teachers will be perceived differently by the students, then this performance can affect their attitude.

Talking about students, one part that can indicate the successful or unsuccessful learning of a foreign language is students' language attitude. Some researchers found that the attitude towards the language which is being learned by students is in line with the success in learning the language. The language attitude is normally in line between thought and act. In other words, a person who learns a language such as English and has a positive attitude towards the language will behave positively toward the language teaching. When teachers' learning strategies and teaching methodologies are 'enjoyed' by students, the 'academic relationship' will enhance and also conversely. In some cases, students will be bored, make a noise, disturb their friends, and often leave a class because they do not like their teacher's learning strategies, do not enjoy the classroom activities, do not understand the teacher's utterances, way of interaction to the students, or even personalities. So, From the explanation above, it can be concluded that there are many factors that influence student's attitudes toward learning English. The teacher's learning performance, including strategies, methodologies, the material presented, the learning activities, the way of evaluating has positive or negative impacts on students' accomplishment and abilities in learning English. They also influence students' attendance, behaviors, and low rate of dropout. These also motivate them to perform well in the English subject and conversely.

The present of the study is to investigate the language attitude of students at MAN 1 Batang Hari academic year 2022/2023 towards language and learning English. This is supposed to throw some light on their attitudes toward English as a foreign language.

## **2. Method**

This research is part of survey research. Survey study is designed to provide a quantitative or numeric

description of trends, attitudes, or opinions of a population by studying a sample of that population (Creswell, 2012). The research is being carried out at MAN 1 Batanghari, located at Jalan Gajah Mada, Kampung Tengah, Teratai, Kecamatan. Muara Bulian, Kabupaten Batanghari, Provinsi Jambi.

The focus of the research is the student's attitude toward the English Language and learning English. The data were collected from questionnaires. The questionnaire was developed to obtain information about students' attitudes towards English as a foreign language and learning of English. This research uses a questionnaire carried out by Orfan (2020). He designed the questionnaire by adapting Attitude/Motivation Test Battery (AMTB) which was designed by Gardner (1985). He also developed the questionnaire items by adapting the attitude questionnaire test used by Boonrangsri et al. (2004) and Abidin et al. (2012).

The questionnaire is all about the positive attitude and the negative attitude of the students towards language and learning English. There are positive and negative statements. The researcher groups them in the classes for easier evaluation. They were analyzed through statistical analysis to discover and examine the student's general attitudes. Frequencies and descriptive statistics were used to analyze the students' overall impressions of English as a foreign language and learning English.

This is the English-language version of the Attitude/motivation Test Battery (AMTB) for students studying English as a Foreign Language. The researchers composed of two sections: a) attitudes towards English as a foreign language, b) attitudes towards learning English. the categories classified into five alternatives: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Uncertain, 4 = Agree, and 5= strongly agree).

The researchers distributed the questionnaires to the students. They were asked to return the completed Surveys early the following day, and follow-up focus group interviews were conducted with the students at that time.

Upon the completion of the questionnaires, interviews with selected respondents were conducted. The interview was used as a clarification medium, that is, to clarify responses (the students' choices given by respondents in the task). The interview was also directed at the investigation of the reasons underlying a given choice. (synthesized from Aziz. 2001)

## **3. Finding and Discussion**

This section is organized according to the two main parts of the questionnaires: attitude towards English as a foreign language and attitude towards

learning English. For statistical analysis, the responses were encoded and analyzed based on the frequency and percentage of the respondent's choice.

The subjects or respondents of this study is one of the most advantaged groups learning English in an environment equipped with psychological, physical, and social support from the Madrasah. So, it was expected that they would have strongly positive attitudes towards English and the use of English language. The results show that they have mildly positive attitudes. According to the correlation results between the students' overall attitudes towards English and the use of English, they welcome English as the frequently used foreign language. All in all, the attitude of the students towards English as a foreign language tended to be positive, indicating that the majority of the students believed that knowing English is one of the requisites of their lives and therefore have a strong wish to communicate in English orally or written. In other words, the students could be said to have a strongly positive attitude towards the importance of English.

The result indicates that the participants were willing to learn English not because they were required to, but because they were aware of the opportunities that English provides, that is, English 'paves the way for their career and get a good job. Moreover, concerning what competence that they want to get in English, it seems they have a high motivation and spirit of having a good command of English: speaking English perfectly (item 1) and fluently (item 12). Next, they make a supreme effort to understand all the English they see or hear; It is believed that they have a

dream to be able to read and understand the English newspaper or magazines like they read the Indonesian ones. This dream also goes to the hope of understanding the English TV program without being dubbed

Referring to the positive impact of having a good command of English, some participants tend to agree that their English competence makes them more educated, at least from their performance (item 9), and it is found that they have a rather positive' in a situation in which their English competence 'stimulate' other people to respect them (item 11). But most of them tend not to say or claim that their English make them think more critically and comprehensively when compared to people who do not know English (item 15).

Talking about modernization (item 2), 53,48% of the respondents believed that English is the language of progress and modernization, and only 3,48% of them disagreed with this statement. In the interview for clarification some respondents most of them have the same opinion or believed that most of the

development of science and technology is written or produced in English. In other words, the language used in the products of the result of science and technology is English, like the language of computer, handphone, and many others. And most of the books containing the science and technology are also written in English. It indicates that only the society who has a good command of English will master the science and technology, which will result in the progress and modernization of the countries.

The second part of the questionnaire, which investigated the attitudes toward learning English, reported positive attitudes overall. Responses to each separate item showed that they had a special basis or reason for having such beliefs or attitudes towards learning English.

Most of the respondents feel that they are really curious to learn English and they really enjoy learning and being in the English class. Most of the respondents felt that English class was one of the places where 'the knowledge of English is distributed or discussed' so that it can enrich their quality of English knowledge.

They believed that learning English made them feel great, about 34,88% (item 3). Feeling great, according to them, refers to the condition compared with other students; they have a great extent, the capacity to 'explore the world' in doing the assignment. It concerns mostly with the language of exploring the internet that the materials for doing the task are available in English. It indicates that they have a high self-confidence in learning.

Next, in the classroom, they tend to feel confident when speaking in the class (item 6). The reason why they feel such a feeling is because they claim that the key to learning English or having a good command of English is by practicing it. Some of them have a motto: "The more we practice, the more perfect we get."

Referring to the treatment and assignment getting from the class, it seems the respondents have a positive attitude towards them. The classroom treatment, that is, what they do, feel in the class. They tend to work hard and get confidence in learning, and they try to avoid anxiety (item 2), worry (item 10), and feeling nervous (item 13) in learning. To avoid such feelings (anxiety, worry, or feeling nervous), the respondents often meet to discuss in a small informal group'. The group is a place for them to "solve" almost all their academic problems". The informal meeting was not scheduled, no chairman, no specific topic, no specific time. In the learning process, they seem to have a high motivation to pay attention to the lecturer's explanation (item 11), appreciate whatever feedback is given by their Teacher (1), and feel safe or calm whenever they are asked to speak English in

the class (item 9). Speaking up in English or doing assignment presentation in class was one of "their great problem"; it challenged them. To anticipate such a problem, in line with the topics presented by their Teachers.

Concerning the grade, unfortunately, some of the respondents, 43% strongly agree, and 21% agree that the motivation for learning English is just to pass the course. When they were asked why they felt such a feeling, some of them stated that it was true that the grade influenced them or it was very important, but it was not their main concern. According to them, the grade was the second layer of their attention. To have a good grade, they have to have a good command of English. The grade is a matter of prestige.

The students experience a pleasant learning situation, so students are motivated because the support from the school is very high. In the process of learning English, understand the subject of each sentence, pay attention to letters, must use all past tense, don't repeat the language, complex sentences, if the subject is the same combined with conjunctions, lots of compound, avoid typo, misspelling

#### 4. Conclusion

The purpose of this research is to investigate the attitude of students who study at MAN 1 Batanghari in the academic year 2022/2023. The objective of this study was to identify the current status of English as a foreign language among the MAN 1 Batang Hari students and their attitudes towards language and learning English. There were 86 students as the respondent of this study. They were to respond to the statements given and to clarify their response in interviews. The results of the questionnaire and interview demonstrated that the vitality and importance of the English language in a globalized era is acknowledged by the learners of English along with its prestigious status in the eye of the respondents as far as its history, philosophy, and literary achievements are concerned. This is shown by their perspective or belief in English as a foreign language and learning English. And it can be seen from their activities related to learning English. This is 'a mirror' to claim that their attitudes (their belief, feeling, activities) towards English as a foreign language and learning English tend to be positive.

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