

# Artikel Sofi Yunianti The Language

*by Sofi Yunianti*

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## The language attitude of Islamic boarding school students toward English

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### ABSTRACT

Language attitude study has proven to reveal students' success and failure in learning language. Attitude is not innate, but learned. Students learn to grow and improve their positive language attitudes towards foreign languages through certain programs at schools. The aim of this research is to investigate the language attitude of students in an Indonesian Islamic boarding school towards English as a foreign Language and to describe why they have the attitude. The respondents were 49 students of 2<sup>nd</sup> grade of senior high school classes from HAC (High-Achieving Class) and LAC (Low-Achieving Class). The design of this research was mixed method using explanatory sequential design. To obtain the data, the instrument used was a questionnaire consisting of cognitive, affective and conative components of language attitudes. Interview was carried out to acquire the reason the students had the attitudes. The finding was both HAC and LAC students' language attitudes were mostly positive (91.83%) in cognitive, affective and conative language attitudes. Some (8.17%) had different language attitudes. They showed positive language attitudes, but acquired low scores and showed negative language attitudes, but acquired high scores. The interview revealed this phenomenon.

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### 1. INTRODUCTION

Every student has different motivations, attitudes, opinions and beliefs about a particular second or foreign language, such as English, so they are willing to learn the language. Students' attitude has been acknowledged as one of the most important factors that impact on learning English as a foreign language. Researches on attitude have been conducted on several approaches, in mentalist view, attitude is 'internal state of readiness' which is learned, not innate [1], therefore attitude is formed through the response to stimulus. The understanding of attitude corresponds to the tripartite model of attitude construction of Rosenberg and Hovland [2] defined as affective, behavioral or conative and cognitive. Affective is feelings; emotion and preferences, cognitive is opinions, beliefs and thought, and behavioral or conative is intentions; perceptions or tendency to behave towards certain entity [3, 1]. Positive and negative attitudes explore these three components to decide the tendency of an attitude in learning a foreign language.

Positive language attitude towards English as a foreign language is distinguished with enthusiasm and strong desire to acquire English, they have positive orientation and tendency towards the language and feel comfortable to English speaking [4]. If students do not have the interest and tendency in acquiring

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English, they will perform negatively. They will not be motivated and enthusiastic in learning English [5]. Language attitude examines people's positive and negative attitudes to different language varieties and how attitude makes clear on the way people perceive the language [6]. Language attitude is a feeling that people have about their own and other language variety and shape their behaviors toward the language. Language attitude is the general feeling toward objects, individuals, institutions, events and abstract ideas such as language [1]. The study of language attitude is to understand linguistic position, perception, and action toward the language and the varieties of language [7]. Language attitude becomes a significant concept because it plays an important role in language learning, in the language acquisition and it develops into a crucial impact on the success of language learning. People who perceive a language as something they like means they have a positive language attitude [8]. Acquiring a new language could not come easily, a positive language attitude toward the language is a great benefit, since learners may achieve better academic results than those who demonstrate negative language attitude [9].

Many studies on language attitudes have found positive attitudes toward the language learned [10-12] with various cases. In Lasagabaster [13] research, positive language attitude from Vietnamese students was found, and evidently had no significant relationship with the age, gender and socio economic status [14]. Positive language attitude of Korean university students towards English appeared due to the opinion that English was communicative and easy to understand [15]. Another case showed that there was an inside-outside classroom phenomenon of English learning for Spanish students that showed the complex and dynamic positive language attitudes. They learned English with the same intensity inside and outside the classroom for social reasons, like status and solidarity [11]. In reverse, the Libyan secondary school EFL students showed negative attitudes towards English in the classroom [10] in all attitude aspects [16], while Lagabaster [13] found that positive language attitudes appeared when English was learned together with local languages rather than learned exclusively. If language attitude was compared with self-confidence, it turned out that positive language attitude and self-confidence had a mutual influence [17], when the self-confidence was high, then the language attitude was positive and vice versa. A study of Indonesian foreign language teachers found that they had the same positive language attitude between male and female teachers [2], meanwhile teachers and families turned out to be the most contributed factors to the positive language attitudes of students towards English learning [12]. The gap filled focuses on examining language attitude in an Islamic boarding school in Indonesia with a unique foreign language learning syllabus. This study does not only examine the positive, negative language attitude and its intensity, but also gain insight language attitude regarding its cognitive, affective and conative aspects.

A different management of foreign language learning is implemented in the school where non-religious subjects only get a very small portion of the overall subjects, yet there is a balanced portion for in and outside English language activities. English and Arabic are treated as the main foreign languages to be used in everyday communication both in and outside the classrooms. The school implements a learning intervention on the acquisition of foreign languages as an exposure to enrich the ability of students to speak the target foreign languages. Various foreign language activity programs for students are available, including the obligation to use the two languages daily where the penalty is imposed for any violation.

The study aims to investigate the language attitude of students in the school towards English and its reason. Three significant components of language attitude were applied, they were cognitive, affective and conative [18]. Confirmation and clarification was done to get further information about the reason the students had those language attitudes.

## 2. RESEARCH METHOD

The research applied a mixed method; the type was the explanatory sequential design. Explanatory sequential design consists of collecting both quantitative and qualitative data to help elaborate and explain the quantitative result [19, 20]. The first step of the research was collecting the quantitative data from the questionnaire about the respondents' language attitudes and followed by confirmation and further explanation of the data using qualitative data acquired from the interview.

The respondents were students of grade 5 of an Islamic boarding school in East Java, Indonesia academic year of 2019 or parallel to grade 2 of general Senior high schools of Indonesian Ministry of Education. The research was conducted in the school in May, 2019. The school applied the institution academic system including students' clustering based on the achievements scores. There were 6 classes, from the highest score 5B to the lowest score 5G class, using the subject's minimum criteria of mastery learning. The research respondents were 49 students from these 5B high-achieving class (HAC) and 5G low-achieving class (LAC). The 5B HAC consisted of 30 students and 5G LAC 19 students. They have lived in the school dormitory at least for 5 years.

This research used a questionnaire on language attitude and an interview as the instruments. The questionnaire was adapted from Abidin [16] and modified based on the context of the boarding school environment. The questionnaire consists of 3 components of language attitude and divided into 30 statements. The statement was put in a four-point Likert Scale with the criteria: 4= strongly agree, 3=agree, 2=disagree, 1=strongly disagree. In addition, the questionnaire had been tried out to 30 students of a high school in Surabaya and its validity and reliability has been tested. The result revealed that all items of statement in the questionnaire were valid proven by the score of Correlation Item-Total Correlation  $\geq 0.30$ . Besides, in terms of the reliability, the result of Cronbach-Alpha test showed that the questionnaire was reliable with a score of Alpha index higher than 0.70, 0.928 [21, 22]. So, the questionnaire was valid and reliable to be used to get the data on the language attitude of students in the Islamic boarding school towards English. To strengthen and to know more deeply why the students had those attitudes, an unstructured interview was used. The interview was conducted without compiling an items list of strict questions [23].

The data were analyzed using Widoyoko's rubric classification of language attitude [24] and SPSS 21 programmer. The first step was to calculate the students' answers in the questionnaire and classify the language attitude of each student and group whether they had a positive or negative attitude by rubric classification. After that, the data of the language attitude were observed from the respondents' English scores. The questionnaire was analyzed in percentage and explained descriptively, the interview to some students was carried out to find out the reason they had the attitudes.

### 3. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

The overall result from the questionnaire shows that from 49 students, 45 (91.83%) were positive and 4 (8.17%) were negative language attitudes or under the rubric calculation mostly HAC and LAC had positive language attitude with the total score of HAC 2734 and LAC 1716 and negative attitude with the score of HAC 73 and LAC 214. Other data obtained were students' English scores from English teachers' scoring books, the average of the score were 7.95 for HAC and 7.02 for LAC compared to score 7 as the subject's minimum criteria of mastery learning. The focus of the discussion is on the positive language attitude found due to the small amount of data appearing for negative language attitude (8.17%) and the fact that the previously stated assumption about students with negative language attitude do not have enthusiasm for learning the language, thus impacting on low language proficiency has been proven through the low English language proficiency with an average value of 5.83 for LAC (3 students). For students with negative language attitude from HAC (1 student) but getting a score of 8.5 is discussed at the end of this paper

#### 3.1. The language attitudes towards english

The following is the discussion on the findings of the positive language attitude consisting of the cognitive, affective and conative components in line with the idea that positive language attitude involves three components; it means if a student has a positive attitude, they have those three components positive at the same time [25].

#### 3.2. Cognitive component.

The cognitive component refers to the knowledge, belief or thought [18] in this research it refers to English, the foreign language as the respondents' knowledge and subject at school. The statements number 1-10 have the purpose to know the students' cognitive components of language attitude, shown in Table 1.

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Table 1. Students' cognitive component of language attitude (%).

No.	STATEMENTS	SD	D	A	SA	Total
1.	Studying English is important in this globalization era.	-	4.1	44.9	51	95.9
2.	I have more knowledge and more understanding when studying English.	-	2	67.3	30.6	97.9
3.	I like English so much; I look forward to studying more English in the future.	-	12.2	40.8	46.9	87.7
4.	I can speak English easily both in the classroom and in daily life.	-	14.3	73.5	12.2	85.7
5.	Studying English helps me communicate in English effectively	-	2	51	46.9	97.9
6.	I'm able to think and analyze the content in English subject.	2	20.4	53.1	24.5	77.6
7.	I'm satisfied with my performance in the English subject.	4.1	36.7	42.9	16.3	59.2
8.	In my opinion, English is easy and fun to learn	2	12.2	57.1	28.6	85.7
9.	I can understand English words in all formal and informal activities	2	28.6	51	16.3	67.3
10.	I can write stories, speeches, and all activities that use English easily.	2	28.6	55.1	14.3	69.4

SD=Strongly Disagree; D=Disagree; A=Agree; SA: Strongly Agree

The majority of the students show positive language attitudes in cognitive component. Table 1 illustrates that the students' belief that English is important in this globalization era is very high (95.9%). When studying English they believe that they will have more knowledge and understanding (97.9%), beside that they think that studying English helps them communicate in English effectively (97.9%), so they have a desire to study more English in the future (87.7%). The students argue that they can think and analyze the content in English subject (77.6%), understand English words in all formal and informal activities (67.3%), write stories, speeches, and all activities that use English easily (69.4%). They also can speak English easily both in the classroom and in daily life (85.7%). They consider that English is easy and fun to learn (85.7%). Yet, one item describing the students' satisfaction towards their performances in English is low (59,2)

### 3.3. Affective factor.

Another component of language attitude is affective which refers to the emotional and feeling toward the attitude object [18]. The statements numbers 11-20 illustrate the students' affective language attitudes, shown in Table 2.

5 Table 2. Students' affective component of language attitude (%).

No.	STATEMENTS	SD	D	A	SA	Total
11.	I feel proud when studying English language	-	10.2	57.1	32.7	89.8
12.	I feel excited when I communicate in English with others.	-	10.2	55.1	34.7	89.8
13.	Studying English subject makes me feel more confident	-	12.2	55.1	32.7	87.8
14.	I don't get anxious when I have to communicate in English	-	22.4	67.3	10.2	77.5
15.	I enjoy doing all the activities in English.	-	26.5	53.1	20.4	73.5
16.	I can speak with confidently in front of people when using English	-	40.8	51	8.2	59.2
17.	I am interested in studying English.	-	4.1	49	46.9	95.9
18.	I am always excited when there are competitions that use English.	-	36.7	46.9	16.3	63.2
19.	Studying English makes me have good emotions (feeling).	-	26.5	61.2	12.2	73.4
20.	My curiosity about English is very high.	2	14.3	40.8	42.9	83.7

SD=Strongly Disagree; D=Disagree; A=Agree; SA: Strongly Agree

Reviewing the result of Table 2, it can be seen that the students have positive language attitudes in the affective components. Here, the students' interest in studying English is very high (95.9%), they feel proud (89.8%), more confident (87.8%) and have good emotions or feeling (73.4%) when studying English. When they communicate with others in English they feel excited (89.8%) and do not get anxious (77.5%). The students enjoy doing all English activities (73.5%) and feel excited when there are English competitions (63.2%). The students' curiosity about English is very high (83.7). Yet, the statement mentioning that they can speak English confidently in front of people is low (59.2)

### 3.4. Conative component.

The conative component refers to the way people behave and react in a particular situation which is related to the language learned [18]. This component is described in the statements number 21-30. Table 3 reveals the students' positive conative language attitudes towards English. It is represented by the very high score (97.9%) of the statement saying they pay attention when the teacher explains the lesson. The wish to practice speaking English with friends whose English are good is also very high (91.8%) and so is the preference to practice English the way native speakers do (91.9%). Studying English makes them more confident in expressing themselves (85.7%) and they feel relaxed whenever they have to speak in English class (73.5%).

5 Table 3. Students' conative component of language attitude (%).

No.	STATEMENTS	SD	D	A	SA	Total
21.	Speaking English anywhere does not make me feel worried	-	18.4	57.1	24.5	81.6
23.	I can speak English because I am used to obeying the rules	-	30.6	61.2	8.2	69.4
25.	When I hear a student in my class speaking English well, I like to practice speaking with her.	2	6.1	57.1	34.7	91.8
26.	Studying English makes me have more confidence in expressing myself.	-	14.3	55.1	30.6	85.7
27.	I am relaxed whenever I have to speak in my English class.	-	26.5	59.2	14.3	73.5
28.	I am enthusiastic in all activities when English is being taught.	-	30.6	53.1	16.3	69.4
29.	I pay attention when the English teacher is explaining the lesson	-	2	51	46.9	97.9
30.	I like to practice English the way native speakers do.	-	8.2	53.1	38.8	91.9

SD=Strongly Disagree; D=Disagree; A=Agree; SA: Strongly Agree

Beside that the students do not feel worried when speaking English anywhere (81.6%). Despite the fact that they have a positive attitude, it turns out that only 69.4% of these students feel enthusiastic in all activities in English class and when relating their ability to speak English and compliance with rules, only about (69.4%) students agree.

Observing the data above, the tendency of the positive language attitudes of the students as respondents in this research is clearly exposed. In the cognitive component, the knowledge, belief or thought aspect appears as positive, so they have positive knowledge, belief or thought towards English regardless of their class, either HAC or LAC. In the affective component, this tendency is even more apparent. The emotional and feeling aspects studied are positive, they feel proud, excited, confident and enjoyed in learning English. Meanwhile, in the conative aspect, the positive language attitude is seen in how these students behave and react. They are willing to learn English and behave positively in class. Some statements show less positive responses, especially related with their English performance, confidence, enthusiasm, self defence.

### 3.5. Intensity

The result reveals that most (91.83%) of all respondents with the total score of HAC 2734 and LAC 1716 have positive language attitudes towards English. Students with positive language attitude may achieve better academic results [9], however there are different facts shown in Table 4 where respondent no. 5 from HAC performs a negative language attitude while her English score is good (8.5) and students number 1, 5, 8, and 19 from LAC have positive language attitudes, yet their average English score is 6.25 below 7 as the subject's minimum criteria of mastery learning. So, 1 out of 45 students (2.2%) show negative language attitude but acquires a high English score and 4 (8.9%) show positive language attitude but have low English scores. This situation seems to be due to the difference in attitude intensity [1]. Responds to statements that describe attitude intensity especially that show behavior guide and persistence [3] reach > 85 indicating the group has a high attitude intensity. Interviews revealed that the high intensity of the positive attitudes shown by the students with low scores but with positive attitude guided their behavior towards learning English. They extended their English learning themselves through activities like watching movies, listening to songs, or joining singing contest. They also actively joined the school English activities outside class. These students apparently were not happy with learning English in class, they complained about the teaching learning methods and materials with too many explanations and written exercises. They considered that learning in class was formal, monotonous and not enjoyable. Yet, even when they had a belief that studying English in the class was only formality to get the scores, and scores did not determine learning achievement they persisted on remaining in class to study at the same time expanding on exposure to English outside the class.

Table 4. Different language attitude

HAC		
Resp No.	Language Attitude	English Score
5	(-)	8.5
LAC		
Resp No.	Language Attitude	English Score
1	(+)	6.5
5	(+)	6.5
8	(+)	6
19	(+)	6

#### 4. DISCUSSION

The assumption that students with high English scores have positive language attitudes and those with low English scores have negative language attitudes did not occur in the LAC students, because although their English scores were not high, they showed positive language attitudes on the three cognitive, conative and affective aspects. Being a non-religion subject in the religion school that has a specific curriculum design compared to other public schools, English has far less portion than the religion subjects, yet the school's policy towards English seems to be a quite important role to the students' language attitudes and their intensities. The first policy is the obligation to use English when communicating among students and teachers at school, and fines will be imposed on those who violate this obligation. Secondly, the school provides a variety of extra activities for students to actively use English outside the classroom. This fact might be the reason why almost 90% of the HAC and LAC students like English, although not all of them reach the minimum standard score.

The interview revealed the different language attitudes where the respondent from HAC with high English score (8.5) performed a negative attitude towards English. The student did not like English nor had intention to speak English. She learned English because of the school regulation and a class competition for better scores achievement among students. She indeed thought that English was merely a subject to learn, she only needed to have a high score of the subjects without any implication. She had a belief that English was not very important in this globalization era and was not the only foreign language involved in an international scene. It is a seemingly less productive and disadvantageous attitude, but further examination is required to uncover the background of the negative attitude. On the other hand, students (respondents number 1,5,8, and 19) whose English scores were lower than the minimum criteria but behaved positively towards English apparently felt more enjoyable learning English outside the classroom. As a matter of fact, the school has a variety of English-language programs as the extra activities outside the classroom held by the school's language advisory council, including the obligation to use English at school. These students find themselves enjoyed towards the various activities as a demand to study English more based on their high intention of their positive language attitude [3].

The results of the interviews with the two groups mentioned in Table 4 gave rise to a parallel but unique pattern of relationship attitudes. The first group brings out uniqueness, high English scores but negative language attitude. For this group all programs in the school outside and in the classroom are considered as part of the learning process that must be followed and students must achieve at least the subject minimum criteria. Competition between students in the class is included in this assumption. The impact is because they are willing to study hard and compete with their classmates, students are very likely to get high scores, not necessarily to have a positive attitude towards the subject, so studying hard to achieve high score at school is enough.

Getting lower score than the minimum criteria but with a positive attitude towards English, the second group tends to be more open to choose kinds of learning English at school rather than just sitting in class listening passively to the teacher, not understanding the lesson, but only to get grades, in spite of the fact that they realize English is very important and they need it. They do not care about getting low scores in English class but they choose their own way of learning English which they believe will make them gain better English. The consequence of providing various types of English activities outside the classroom thus raises two-arrow head effect. One of which is it may support the students' English acquisition with the bulk exposure of the language, yet it can be a blunder to classroom teachers if the lesson is not as interesting as the out-side class programs, the impact is studying English in the class is less appealing and this may result in students' low scores.

#### 5. CONCLUSION

In sum, this research was conducted with the aim of knowing the language attitudes of Islamic boarding school students towards English and to illustrate the reasons why they had these attitudes. Based on the results obtained from the questionnaire and interview, there are several conclusions that can be drawn from this research. The students of this school who are respondents in this research have positive language attitudes towards English both at HAC and LAC. They also have positive language attitudes among the three cognitive, affective and conative components. Cognitively, they already know the importance of English in the era of globalization, they believe they will have knowledge when learning English, and they like learning more English in the future. Affectively, they also have pride in learning English, feel excited, confident and enjoy when learning English. Conatively, most respondents think that they speak English because they are accustomed to obeying the rules; they pay attention when English teachers explain the lesson, and also like to practice English as native speakers do. Some numbers of respondents are found to have different language attitudes. In that sense, they have several reasons and factors. The result of the interviews shows that some

12]ents at LAC have positive language attitudes but have low English scores due to several factors such as teaching methods and learning materials that are not in accordance with their wishes. They prefer to study English outside the classroom such as competitions, programs, and other campus agendas. While a student at HAC who has a negative language attitude but has a good English score, apparently has different learning perceptions and motivations towards English. These findings encourage future further research to investigate the management of teaching English in the classroom that affects students' language attitudes.

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Eka Ayu Rizki Utami was graduated from University Muhammadiyah of Surabaya 2019 in English Education Department. She graduated from ITTC Gontor for girls 5, Kediri, Indonesia in 2014. During this time, she was an active student who learned and participated in activities and organization both intra and extra campus. She has interest in teaching English as a Foreign Language and currently teaches in an English course for Junior High school students in Surabaya.



Dwijani Ratnadewi received the graduate and postgraduate degree at Surabaya State University, Indonesia in Discourse analysis and pragmatic concentration. She has interest on both linguistic and teaching field. She conducted research on indigenous language pragmatic transfers and also investigated the critical thinking content of student works, which is developed into classroom research towards critical thinking and creativity of student essays. She is conducting psycholinguistic research on the bilingual children second language intervention. Currently she is a lecturer in English Department in the Faculty of Education and Teachers' training Muhammadiyah University of Surabaya and in Indonesian Language Graduate Program. She also serves as the chief editor of the Teaching English Language and Literature Journal at the department.



Sofi Yuniarti gained her undergraduate degree in Airlangga University Surabaya and her postgraduate in English Language and Literature Teaching in Surabaya State University. She currently works as a lecturer in Muhammadiyah University of Surabaya, Indonesia and broadly interested in linguistics with particular emphasis on discourse analysis, psycholinguistics, and corpus linguistics in language choice which is reflecting diaspora's identity. Her research agenda focuses on the autism preschool children on how to improve communicative competence which applies in appropriate context. Her past research investigated critical discourse analysis in politician language and she is primarily conducting research in language impairment, which proposes discourse and pragmatics disorder theory.

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