

# STUDENTS' ATTITUDE TOWARD ENGLISH, LANGUAGE LEARNING, AND ENGLISH NATIVE SPEAKER

**Fadhil Arief Primadi, Ag. Bambang Setiyadi, Budi Kadaryanto**

primadifadhil@gmail.com

## ABSTRACT

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui sikap siswa SMA kelas dua di kecamatan Gisting terhadap Bahasa Inggris, pengajaran Bahasa Inggris, dan penutur Asli Bahasa Inggris dan faktor-faktor yang memengaruhi sikap mereka. Penelitian ini menggunakan metode *mixed-method* dimana tahap kuantitatif dilakukan sebelum tahap kualitatif. Data penelitian didapatkan dari kuisioner dan wawancara kelompok yang sudah ditentukan. Ada 120 siswa kelas dua angkatan 2014 – 2015 dari empat sekolah menengah atas. Para siswa menunjukkan sikap positif seiring dengan nilai rata-rata yang diraih mencapai 3.6684 dari 120 siswa terhadap tiga variabel yang diberikan. Temuan pada tahap wawancara menunjukkan bahwa sikap positif siswa muncul karena adanya motivasi yang mereka miliki; *instrumental* dan *integrative*. Para guru dianjurkan untuk mengindahkan dan mengetahui perasaan, kepercayaan, kebutuhan, dan sikap siswa dengan seksama sebelum merancang rencana program pembelajaran untuk mempertahankan sikap positif terhadap Bahasa Inggris dan pengajarannya.

This study investigated students' attitudes towards English, English language learning, and native speaker of English at second grade of senior high schools in Gisting subdistrict and factors that may have influenced students' attitudes. This research employed a mixed-method methodology where the quantitative phase preceded the qualitative phase. The data were collected from questionnaires and focus group interview. There were 120 students of 2014-2015 academic year from four senior high schools. The students showed positive attitudes as there was 3.6684 of total mean score gained by 120 students toward three variables presented. The interview findings revealed that the students' positive attitude may be caused by their motivation; *instrumental* and *integrative*. The teachers should respect and carefully investigate about students' feelings, beliefs, need, and behaviors before designing English courses to maintain the positive attitudes towards English and English language learning.

**Keywords:** attitude, language learning, native speaker

## INTRODUCTION

English language teaching has become one aspect of life that cannot be separated in the globalization era nowadays. The role of it seeks to develop learners' English proficiency for study, work, and leisure in order to provide them the opportunities for personal development in particular circumstances. Maximizing the learning results of our English learning, many ways have been developed and improved, including language teaching techniques, learning theories, teaching materials, teaching approaches and methodologies, syllabus design, lesson plan etc. Though similar research of students' attitude has been undertaken in many ways, most of them are strongly investigated under western cultural assumptions (Lin, 1998). The researcher believes that there is little research that has been linked to the topic of how teaching and learning environment affectively influenced students attitude especially in Indonesia. In Education, attitude plays an important role in accepting or rejecting something.

Attitude is a product of interaction process which somebody gives respond from the accepted stimulus. In other words, attitude closely related to object upon receptor. Researchers in the fields of psychology and education, especially language learning, consider several definitions of attitude which mention different meanings from different contexts and perspectives (Abidin, 2012). Accordingly, Setiyadi (2006) points out that the attitude concept has three components i.e., attitudes to English, attitudes to English as a subject to be learned, and attitudes to native speakers of English. These three attitudinal aspects are based on the three theoretical assumption that attitude in learning a target language may affect

motivation in learning the language; motivation can mediate any relation between language attitudes and language achievement (Setiyadi, 2006:29).

Each classifications of attitudes examined in this research is considered as important factors on students mastery of English. Those points examined have their own contributions towards student's process and results of study that teacher and academicians should take into account. The researcher assumes that if those points are examined well in teaching learning process, the students will have a kind of quality and quantity improvement in target language learning. It is the researcher's belief that positive attitudes towards English and its classifications mentioned can have a beneficial impact on the process of attempting language learners in mastering English as a foreign language.

## **METHODS**

To answer the research questions proposed in the very beginning, the researcher administered a mixed-method methodology where the quantitative phase (questionnaire) preceded the qualitative phase (focus group interview). This methodology was chosen for complementary purposes to seek further elaboration, illustration, and clarification of the questionnaire data with the interview to get *fieldnotes* (Bogdan and Biklen, 1982:74). This pattern of research was required due to the complexity of the human behavior to obtain. The mixed-method methodology in this study used survey questionnaire to obtain quantitative data in which in the researcher's beliefs of what profiled in the quantitative data may not cover all the learners' perspective (Yu, 2013). Therefore, qualitative and quantitative ways of research were necessarily required to gain comprehensible findings.

The participants in this research were 120 students in four Senior High Schools in Gisting Sub district: SMA Muhammadiyah 1 Gisting, SMK Muhammadiyah 1 Gisting, Madrasah Aliyah Mathla'ul Anwar Gisting, and SMA Negeri 1 Gunung Alip. Thirty students in the same level of study were taken as sample from each school selected.

The measuring instrument was an attitude questionnaire focusing on the attitudes towards English (n=8), English Language Learning (n=8), and English Native Speaker (n=8). The questionnaire was consisted by items created in positive and negative wording. To investigate the validity of the questionnaire items, the researcher used *interrater validity* developed by Setiyadi (2006). In the result, their comment and suggestion were followed to make the validity improved. By using The Statistical Package for the Social Science Program (SPSS) version 17.0, an analysis of item reliability was determined through the reliability coefficient test. The grand value of alpha covering the three sub-scales was 0.817 meaning that the instrument was highly reliable.

The data that gained in this research were two types i.e. quantitative and qualitative. Each student's responses to the questionnaire were scored in the given values; 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, 5 = strongly agree. The quantitative data of the questionnaires was analyzed in terms of means, using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). *One way ANOVA* was chosen to compare the mean from four schools. For analyzing the qualitative part of the data, on the other hand, a content analysis method was used. In the analysis process, the interviewees' responses for each question were firstly attached along

with English translation. After that, the responses were analysed in terms of themes related to the study objectives.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

Approximately 120 students in four senior high schools students of Gisting had been surveyed related to the topic, Students' Attitude toward English, English Language Learning and English Native Speaker from May 11, 2014 to July 21, 2014. The students' responses ( $n=120$ ) to the questionnaire items ( $n=24$ ) were scored by the given values; 1=strongly disagree, 2=disagree, 3=neutral, 4=agree, 5= strongly agree, respectively. The questionnaire was divided into three categories; Attitude towards English ( $n=8$ ), Attitude towards English Learning ( $n=8$ ), Attitude towards English native speaker ( $n=8$ ). The data taken into SPSS 17 for windows was evaluated by calculating the percentages, mean scores and standard deviation.

The result in accordance to the first research question reveals that the students' attitude toward English, students' attitude toward English language learning, and students' attitude toward English native speaker is positive. This is due to the overall mean value for the 120 students answering 24 items of questionnaire. It is proven with the overall means gained by the questionnaire concerning on students' attitude which reach 3.6684 of mean and 0.44298 of the standard deviation. Accordingly, this positive attitude which had shown may demonstrate a high level of enthusiasm towards English language learning activity. the students of SMK Muhammadiyah 1 Gisting represent the lowest mean scores; 3.5806, SD = 0.4429. On the other side, SMA Negeri 1 Gunung Alip also shows a slight

different of mean values from the previous one. It is 3.5875 with 0.41944 point of standard deviation. On the other side, Madrasah Aliyah Mathla'ul Anwar Gisting mean reaches 3.4956,  $SD = 0.25831$ . Meanwhile, the highest mean score is gained by SMA Muhammadiyah 1 Gisting with 3.8319, with 0.28649 points standard of deviation.

The sub-scales results of students' attitude toward English Language show slight variation of mean among overall responses in each school. Concerning the first research question, the result of descriptive analysis of students' attitude toward English language shows that the overall mean score among the participants is 3.7844 ( $SD = 0.44908$ ). This result reveals that the participants have positive attitude towards English Language. More importantly, the writer could say that it is a positive response reflected from Gisting sub-district. In addition, the mean score of 120 students of four senior high schools in Gisting is gained from four different schools in one sub-district. They are SMA Muhammadiyah 1 Gisting, SMK Muhammadiyah 1 Gisting, Madrasah Aliyah Mathla'ul Anwar Gisting, and SMA Negeri 1 Gunung Alip. As seen in Table 3, the attitudes to English mean score of the students in SMK Muhammadiyah 1 Gisting considered as the lowest mean score with 3.6625 ( $SD = 0.52538$ ). On the other side, Madrasah Aliyah Mathla'ul Anwar Gisting shows 3.7708 of mean ( $SD = 0.33969$ ). SMA Negeri 1 Gunung Alip shows 3.7125 of mean score ( $SD = 0.48706$ ). At last, the highest mean score of the attitudes toward English language is gained by SMA Muhammadiyah 1 Gisting with 3.9917 of mean score ( $SD = 0.36544$ ).

In the second variable, Students' Attitude toward English Language Learning, the students show positive attitudes as the overall mean reached was 3.7573,  $SD = 0.50530$ . The writer assume that this positive attitude to English language learning may lead to better achievement as it considered positively as well by the teacher. These results represent that the students in each school have favorable attitude toward English language learning. Despite of the positive attitude reflected, the first school, SMK Muhammadiyah 1 Gisting represents the lowest mean score among others. It is 3.6833 of mean score and 0.57586 of the standard deviation. On the other side, Madrasah Aliyah Mathla'ul Anwar mean score reaches 3.7708 with 0.46665 of standard deviation. The only state senior high school investigated, SMA Negeri 1 Gunung Alip shows positive attitude as well with 3.6875 of mean score and 0.52291 of standard deviation. The highest mean score is reached by SMA Muhammadiyah 1 Gisting with 3.8875 of mean score and 0.44328 of standard deviation.

The students' responses regarding their attitude toward English native speaker are quite different in one point from two variables discussed previously. The findings indicate that the majority of the students present positive attitude by showing that the total mean value of all school is 3.4635 with 0.45875 of standard deviation. From four different schools namely, SMK Muhammadiyah 1 Gisting, Madrasah Aliyah Mathla'ul Anwar Gisting, SMA Negeri 1 Gunung Alip, and SMA Muhammadiyah 1 Gisting that have been investigated, SMA Muhammadiyah 1 Gisting gain the highest mean score of all the schools as its mean reached 3.6167 ( $SD = 0.45875$ ). The second highest mean score is gained by Madrasah Aliyah Mathla'ul Anwar with 3.4792 of mean score ( $SD = 0.34753$ ). On the other side,

SMK Muhammadiyah 1 Gisting reaches 3.3958 of mean score (SD = 0.3958). The remaining school, SMA Negeri 1 Gunung Alip indicates the lowest mean score of others with 3.3625 (SD = 0.56796).

The results from interview phase indicate that their positive attitude arises from greater emphasis on instrumental reason for learning (e.g. enable to pass exam and to pass university or job entrance) and better future career (e.g. enable to get better job and occupation). This evidence indicates that the students see English as vital part of skill, either currently or for the future. Emphasizing the obvious role of English in nowadays era Joseba (2005) believes that as English has been considered as *de facto* of international language of science and technology. Accordingly, this belief acquired by the students influences their perspectives to next two ideas; English language learning, and English native speaker.

The positive attitude shown toward English is clearly because the students have a good awareness and response of the international role of English in their future career. They do realize that Bahasa Indonesia as their mother tongue cannot take much role in terms of creating relationship with other country. Rachmajanti (2008) states that Bahasa Indonesia cannot currently be used as a means of communication with the outside world in the context of foreign policy and to develop relationship with other countries. Therefore, that English is the language of international communication, the language of science, modern technology, trade, politics, and used in almost all fields, is well responded by the students as Talebinezhad (2001) believe that English is one key factor for accessing to the world's intellectual and technical development. In line with the idea above, a positive attitude comes as the result of motivation that the students have at the



very first place. Despite of their positive attitude appear, Gardner (1985) cited in At-Tamimi and Shuib (2009) defines attitudes as components of motivation in language learning. According to him, “motivation ... refers to the combination of effort plus desire to achieve the goal of learning the language plus favorable attitudes”. Mostly, the students who have positive attitude see English as a means of acquiring better future career (instrumental) rather than individual improvement for integrating to another culture (integrative). Therefore, students positive attitude shown above appear as part of process of awareness and motivation toward English role in attaining their individual goals (integrative or instrumental).

The positive attitude toward English language learning is not so surprising that the students consider language learning taken in the class is very important to their development. This may be the next impact of the previous discussion stating that the students are aware of English role in this era. The students who have awareness then realize that the next phase they should handle well is language learning taken in the class. Accordingly, the positive attitude toward English language learning is created as the impact of that motive because learning a language is closely related to the attitudes towards the languages according to Choy and Troudi (2006). Karahan (2007, p.84) addresses that “positive language attitudes let learner have positive orientation towards learning English”. As such, attitudes may play a very crucial role in language learning as they would appear to influence students’ success or failure in their learning. Therefore, the finding which is positive may lead to the success as the result of English language learning taken in the class since it becomes a great desire of English mastery by

the student. Another possible interpretation of the positive finding is that it may be the impact of globalization era. Their consciousness and awareness of English in boundless era lead them next to have positive demeanor toward English language learning. As Zughouli (2003) claims that particularly in Asian country many students are affected by Western culture where it can be seen in forms of fashion, music, culture of the youth, movies, business style, television program, entertainment, and all of western nuance noticeable there. Similarly, it also occurred in this nation where western countries become direction leader of globalization. Consequently, people especially students are driven to master English as the common way of involve in the advance of era. Therefore, language learning is seen as the only way to improve their communication

Then, the most reasonable explanation for this may be that the students' lacks of English skills so that by learning it well, it would enable them to cope better both in their academic and future career. Similar to the previous variable, the students also show great enthusiasm on English learning. Having great desires for learning the language is considered as one of the main components of language learning motivation (Gardner, 2006) cited in Attamimi and Shuib (2009). They thought that English learning taken in the school should be handled well. Many reasons come up due to the positive findings above. The primary motive of the students' positive attitude toward English language learning is instrumental motivation.

English language learning cannot be separated by the existence of its native speaker as a genuine reference of how the language is used. It is consistent with Wu (2009) who believes that English native speakers have the advantage over

non-native speakers and are often viewed around the world as the embodiment of the English standard. With regard to their attitudes towards the English native speaker, the findings reveal that most of the students responded positively to the idea that English native speaker existence is very important for their own personal development of English mastery and English language learning taken in class.

Another noticeable reason of positive attitude is their integrative motive. Most of students argue that they want to be able to master English the way English native speaker communicate and to have a good communication with them. As Setiyadi (2008) refers integrative motivation is the willing of the language learner to integrate to target language culture. Meanwhile, Tang (1999) mentions that language is part of culture. All in all, most of students get inspired to master English well as well as native speaker of English. Therefore, it may lead to the advantageous of English language learning in classes. Their admiration and positive attitude shown toward English native speaker may be used as the factor to push their learning performance by presenting more authentic material for instance. Since the existence of native speaker through media such as magazines, movies, song, news are nearly flawless, the teacher may effectively design teaching and learning activity more alive the way English is used commonly. The students assume that English native speaker could cover the real use of English better in terms of pronunciation for instance. They also claim that the teacher could not perfectly represent the true image of real situation of communicating in English. Similar finding is reported by Sung (2010), most students shared the impression that native English speaker speak better than non-native speaker. A

majority of the students thought that native speaker speak more 'standard' English and their pronunciation more accurate.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

Based on the result of the questionnaires and interview, the researcher draw several conclusions briefly described as follow:

1. Four senior high schools of Gisting sub district gain positive attitude toward three variables offered; attitude toward English, attitude toward English language learning, and attitude toward English native speaker. It can be concluded that they are well aware of the importance of English, the role of English language learning, and the contribution of English native speaker. Briefly, attitude concept is considered as an essential component which is expected to trigger students' better performance in English language learning.
2. The positive attitude shown toward three variables presented may be caused by their motivation. The results showed that instrumental motivation is the primary source of the students' attitude toward English and English language learning. Integrative reasons were also regarded as important motives to the students' attitude toward the three variables mentioned. In regards to the integrative reasons, the results provided evidence that learning English to be part of the culture of its people had the least impact in students' positive attitude toward those three variables. In addition, globalization era also reinforces the development of three variables presented toward student attitude as the result.

The research findings can be used as a starting point for providing some pedagogical implications that should be taken into consideration by both English teacher and syllabus designers. The implications are provided as follow:

1. The study showed that students from four different schools show positive attitude toward three variables presented namely attitude toward English, attitude toward English language learning, and attitude toward English native speaker. The students have high awareness of the vital role of English and English language learning. Most of the students' positive attitude may be resulted primarily because of they are instrumentally and integratively motivated. Therefore, English language courses should be designed according to the students' need, passion, and affection. The teachers should respect and carefully investigate about students' feelings, beliefs, need, and behaviors before designing English courses.
2. English curriculum, syllabus, lesson plan, and classroom activities should involve affective aims according to the students' needs and their individual differences to maintain the positive attitudes towards English and English language learning. For their positive attitude toward English native speaker, it can be handled well as bonus if the teacher could provide more authentic material for instance. For that reason, the affective perspective, especially attitude, should be considered in language research. In other words, the teacher should at least design English courses based on academic and occupational settings.

3. For the next researchers who have vision to investigate the similar variables, the researcher expects that it can be used as contributive reference in developing the research and relating these variables and their performance in English language learning. Additionally, In terms of research instrument, it may be worth to assemble the items of the questionnaire as many as possible to avoid low reliability of the irrelevant items.

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