

Students' Attitudes toward English Learning at a Muhammadiyah Junior High School

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Abstract

English plays a crucial role in supporting students' academic development and global communication skills, making it a compulsory subject in Indonesian junior high schools. However, students' success in learning English is strongly influenced by affective factors, particularly attitude. This study aimed to examine seventh-grade students' attitudes toward English learning at a Muhammadiyah Junior High School in Bengkulu City by exploring affective, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions. A descriptive quantitative research design was employed involving 19 students selected through total sampling. Data were collected using a Likert-scale questionnaire supported by classroom observations and analyzed using descriptive statistics. The findings revealed that students generally demonstrated positive attitudes toward English learning, indicated by a mean score of 3.21 and 81% favorable responses. Students showed emotional enjoyment, recognized the usefulness of English for future opportunities, and actively participated in classroom activities. However, several learners still experienced low confidence in speaking English due to anxiety and fear of making mistakes. These results suggest that while students possess supportive attitudes toward English, pedagogical strategies are needed to foster confidence and transform positive perceptions into effective language use. This study highlights the importance of creating supportive and interactive learning environments to enhance students' engagement in English learning.

Keywords: students' attitudes, English learning, affective factors, junior high school, EFL context

INTRODUCTION

English has increasingly functioned as a global language that enables access to knowledge, technology, and international communication. Within the Indonesian educational system, English is positioned as a compulsory subject starting from junior high school with the aim of developing students' basic communicative competence and preparing them to participate in global interactions. Through formal education, learners are expected not only to acquire linguistic knowledge but also to develop positive learning dispositions, critical thinking skills, and responsible attitudes that support lifelong learning.

Despite its importance, English as a foreign language (EFL) remains challenging for many Indonesian students. These difficulties are not merely caused by linguistic complexity but are also strongly influenced by affective factors such as anxiety, motivation, confidence, and particularly attitude. Attitude plays a central role in shaping how students perceive English lessons, how willing they are to engage in

classroom activities, and how persistent they remain when encountering learning obstacles (Isti and Istikharoh 2019) (Wulandari and Isa 2024). Students who view English positively tend to participate more actively and demonstrate stronger learning commitment, whereas those with unfavorable perceptions often withdraw from classroom participation and show limited effort.

Attitude in language learning refers to learners' emotional responses, beliefs, and behavioral tendencies toward the target language and its learning process. Positive attitudes are commonly associated with enthusiasm, curiosity, and confidence, which encourage learners to practice and interact using English. Conversely, negative attitudes are often linked to fear of making mistakes, low self-esteem, and lack of motivation, all of which may hinder language development.

Previous studies have consistently demonstrated that students' attitudes significantly influence English language learning outcomes. Positive attitudes are associated with higher levels of motivation, engagement, confidence, and academic achievement, whereas negative attitudes tend to reduce students' participation and persistence in learning activities (Fadhilah and Warni 2024) (Agus et al. 2025). In the Indonesian EFL context, several studies have reported that students generally exhibit moderate to positive attitudes toward English learning; however, these attitudes vary depending on classroom environment, teaching strategies, and previous learning experiences

(Budiarti et al. 2022) (Humaira, Putri, and Bukittinggi 2022). Furthermore, a qualitative study published in the *Teaching English and Language Learning English Journal (TELLE)* revealed that students' attitudes are influenced by affective, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions, with teacher support and positive classroom climate playing crucial roles in enhancing motivation and reducing learning anxiety (*Teaching English and Language Learning English Journal (TELLE)* 2025). Although these studies have provided valuable insights into students' attitudes toward English learning, most of them have been conducted in public schools or senior high school settings. Consequently, limited research has investigated students' attitudes in Islamic or Muhammadiyah-based integrated junior high schools, which may possess distinctive cultural, social, and instructional characteristics that influence students' perceptions of English learning. This gap highlights the need for further investigation in such educational contexts.

Preliminary observations at Muhammadiyah Integrated Junior High School in Bengkulu City revealed diverse student responses during English lessons. While some learners appeared enthusiastic and actively involved, others demonstrated passivity and low confidence, particularly in speaking activities. These contrasting behaviors indicate that students' attitudes toward English learning require systematic investigation to obtain a deeper understanding of their learning engagement and participation.

Accordingly, this study aims to examine seventh-grade students' attitudes toward English learning at a Muhammadiyah Integrated Junior High School in Bengkulu City by exploring affective, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions. The findings of this study are expected to contribute to a deeper understanding of affective factors in EFL learning and to provide practical implications for teachers in creating more supportive, engaging, and motivating English learning environments.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This study employed a descriptive quantitative research design to investigate seventh-grade students' attitudes toward English learning. This approach was selected because it enables researchers to systematically describe students' affective, cognitive, and behavioral responses through numerical data and

statistical interpretation, thereby providing an objective overview of students' perceptions of English learning. The study was conducted at a Muhammadiyah Integrated Junior High School in Bengkulu City and involved all seventh-grade students, consisting of 19 learners. Since the population was relatively small, total sampling was applied to ensure complete representation of all participants and minimize sampling bias.

Data were collected through a questionnaire and classroom observations. The questionnaire served as the primary instrument and was developed based on Gardner's (1990) social-psychological theory of second language learning, which emphasizes the significant role of attitudes in influencing learners' motivation and language achievement. The instrument consisted of 20 statements covering affective, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions of students' attitudes toward English learning and employed a five-point Likert scale ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. In addition, classroom observations were conducted to document students' participation, engagement, confidence, and learning behaviors during English lessons in order to support and strengthen the questionnaire findings.

The questionnaire was administered during school hours under the researcher's supervision, while observations were conducted during regular English classes. Before data analysis, the questionnaire items were tested for validity using Pearson Product-Moment correlation and for reliability using Cronbach's Alpha with the assistance of SPSS software to ensure the quality of the instrument. The collected data were then analyzed using descriptive statistical techniques, including mean scores and percentage distributions, whereas observation data were interpreted qualitatively to provide a more comprehensive understanding of students' attitudes. Furthermore, ethical considerations were maintained throughout the research process by obtaining permission from the school, ensuring voluntary participation, and protecting the confidentiality of all participants.

FINDING AND DISCUSSIONS

FINDINGS

The findings of this study revealed that seventh-grade students at Muhammadiyah Integrated Junior High School in Bengkulu City generally demonstrated positive attitudes toward English learning. Based on the questionnaire results, the overall mean score was 3.21 on a four-point Likert scale, indicating that students' attitudes were categorized as positive. Approximately 81% of the responses reflected agreement with positive statements concerning students' enjoyment, interest, and perceptions of the importance of English learning.

From the affective dimension, students showed positive emotional responses toward English lessons. Most learners reported feeling interested and motivated during classroom activities. Classroom observations also indicated that students paid attention to the teacher's explanations, participated in learning tasks, and showed enthusiasm during group activities.

In terms of the cognitive dimension, students demonstrated awareness of the importance of English for academic purposes and future opportunities. Most participants believed that English could support communication, education, and career advancement, which encouraged them to engage seriously in learning activities.

The behavioral dimension also reflected positive attitudes toward English learning. Most students actively participated in classroom activities, completed assignments on time, responded to teacher questions, and engaged in classroom discussions. However, classroom observations revealed that several students still experienced difficulties in speaking activities. Some learners appeared hesitant and lacked confidence when expressing their ideas in English due to anxiety and fear of making mistakes.

Overall, the findings indicate that seventh-grade students generally possessed positive attitudes toward English learning across affective, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions, although certain affective barriers continued to influence students' confidence in using English orally (Agus et al. 2025; Fadhilah and Warni 2024; Wulandari and Isa 2024).

DISCUSSION

The positive attitudes demonstrated by seventh-grade students toward English learning reflect a broader shift in contemporary language teaching perspectives, particularly within the post-method framework. Rather than relying solely on rigid teaching methods, the post-method era emphasizes contextualized instruction that responds to learners' needs, emotions, and classroom realities (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). The students' favorable affective responses and active classroom engagement observed in this study indicate that interactive and responsive learning experiences can foster stronger motivation and participation. This interpretation is further supported by previous studies suggesting that English language teaching practitioners increasingly move beyond single-method approaches and adopt flexible instructional strategies that consider learners' psychological and social contexts. In the present study, students' enjoyment, interest, and willingness to engage in learning activities suggest that classroom practices at the Muhammadiyah Integrated Junior High School reflected post-method principles, as teachers appeared to employ varied instructional techniques that encouraged participation and contributed to positive emotional and behavioral responses. From a psychological perspective, the findings also align closely with Gardner's (1990) social-psychological theory of second language learning, which highlights the central role of attitudes in shaping motivation and learning outcomes. The overall mean score of 3.21 and the high percentage of favorable responses (81%) indicate that students possessed supportive emotional and cognitive orientations toward English learning. These positive attitudes were not merely abstract beliefs but were manifested in observable classroom behaviors, such as completing assignments, responding to teachers' questions, and participating in discussions. However, despite the generally positive learning orientation, several students still demonstrated low confidence in speaking English and were hesitant to express their ideas orally. This phenomenon suggests that although flexible and engaging teaching practices can enhance motivation, additional pedagogical support is required to address language anxiety and communicative hesitation. Within the post-method perspective, this finding highlights the importance of teachers' continuous adaptation of instructional practices to reduce emotional barriers and promote learner autonomy. The

findings of this study are also consistent with previous research conducted in Indonesian EFL contexts (Wulandari and Isa 2024); (Fadhilah and Warni 2024) reported that positive attitudes toward English learning are associated with higher engagement and learning motivation. Nevertheless, Agus et al. (2025) emphasized that emotional challenges may still hinder language performance even when learners highly value English. Therefore, successful English instruction should integrate both affective support and communicative practice to transform positive attitudes into confident language use. Overall, the integration of quantitative findings with post-method and socio-psychological perspectives underscores that students' attitudes toward English learning are shaped by both instructional practices and psychological factors. When learning environments are flexible, supportive, and responsive to learners' needs, students are more likely to develop positive perceptions and actively engage in language learning. Consequently, English teachers at the junior high school level are encouraged to adopt adaptive instructional approaches that foster emotional comfort, motivation, and meaningful language use.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

CONCLUSION

This study investigated seventh-grade students' attitudes toward English learning at a Muhammadiyah Integrated Junior High School in Bengkulu City by examining affective, cognitive, and behavioral dimensions. The findings revealed that students generally possessed positive attitudes toward English learning, as reflected in favorable questionnaire responses, high mean scores, and active participation in classroom activities. Students demonstrated enjoyment in learning English, recognized its importance for future academic and career opportunities, and exhibited positive learning behaviors during classroom instruction. However, despite these positive attitudes, several students still experienced low confidence in speaking English due to anxiety and fear of making mistakes. These findings indicate that positive attitudes toward English learning do not automatically ensure communicative competence and that emotional barriers continue to influence students' language performance. Overall, this study highlights the importance of students' attitudes as a significant affective factor in English learning and emphasizes the need for supportive and student-centered instructional practices to enhance students' engagement and confidence in using English.

SUGGESTION

Based on the findings of this study, English teachers are encouraged to create more supportive, interactive, and student-centered learning environments that can enhance students' confidence and participation in English learning. Since several students still experienced anxiety and fear of making mistakes, teachers should provide meaningful communicative activities, positive reinforcement, and constructive feedback to reduce emotional barriers and encourage students to use English more confidently. Furthermore, teachers are recommended to employ flexible instructional strategies that accommodate students' affective needs and promote active engagement

in classroom activities. For future researchers, it is suggested that further studies involve larger samples and different educational contexts to obtain broader findings regarding students' attitudes toward English learning. In addition, future studies may employ mixed-method or qualitative approaches and examine other affective factors, such as motivation, anxiety, and self-confidence, to gain a more comprehensive understanding of factors influencing English language learning.

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