

# INDONESIAN EFL STUDENTS' ATTITUDE TOWARD LEARNING ENGLISH OF ISLAMIC JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL

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## Abstract

Attitude in one of the students' factor that influence their performance in learning English. It shows the students positive or negative behaviour when attending to English class. This study aims to find out students' attitudes toward learning English of Islamic Junior School that divided into three categories: behavior, cognitive, and affective. A survey research design was employed using questionnaire as the key instrument. 125 students of eight grade in Islamic Junior High School 2 Amuntai, Hulu Sungai Utara Regency, were invited to fill the questionnaire. The result revealed that students have positive attitude (M = 3.50) from behavior aspect (M = 3.66), cognitive aspect (M = 3.58), and affective aspect (M = 3.36). The finding also showed that students have most positive attitude on behavior aspect, and they tend to be neutral on affective aspect. It indicates that overall the position of students' attitude is more to positive ways.

*Key words: EFL students, attitude, English learning, Islamic junior high school*

## A. Introduction

In learning a foreign language, for example English, having a positive attitude is important since it affects students' performance as well as achievement in school. As many factors influencing the learning process in acquiring a foreign language, attitude takes to the consideration beside other factors: internal and external factor. Gardner and Lamber in Abidin *et al*<sup>1</sup> said that students' attitude and perception toward language affect students' ability to master a second language beside mental competence, or language skills. If a learner does not have the interest and tendency in acquiring the target language to communicate with others, this learner will possess a negative attitude and will not be motivated and enthusiastic in language learning<sup>2</sup>. Abu-Snoubar in Mabur<sup>3</sup> supported the idea that language learning can never be separated from the attitudes of the learners since positive ones can be supporting and motivating to the students and heavily demotivating when the learners harbor negative attitudes. Therefore, it is suggested English teachers to consider this factor by providing a good atmosphere in teaching and learning process in the class.

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<sup>1</sup> Abidin *et al.*, "EFL Students' Attitudes towards Learning English Language: The Case of Libyan Secondary School Students", *Asian Social Science* Vol. 8, No. 2 (February 2012), p.121

<sup>2</sup> Shahrzad Eshghinejad, "EFL students' attitudes toward learning English language: The case study of Kashan University students", *Cogent Education* 3 (September 2016), p. 3

<sup>3</sup> Abu-Snoubar, T. K., "An evaluation of EFL Students' Attitudes Toward English Language Learning In Terms Of Several Variables". *International Journal of English Language Teaching*. Vol. 5 No. 6, p. 18-34; Iskhaki Andre Muhammad Mabur, *Investigating Indonesian Junior High Scholl Students Attitude and Motivation towards English Language Learning*, (Master Thesis: University of Muhammadiyah Purwokerto, 2022), p. 3

Attitude refers to belief pattern that is developed over time in a learning process and a given socio-cultural context that plays a critical role<sup>4</sup>. It is also can be said as a disposition to respond favorably or unfavorably to an object, person, institution, or event<sup>5</sup>. The respond then is categorized into three: cognition, affect, and conation. Cognition responses reflect perceptions of, and thoughts about, the attitude object or simply called as belief. Affective responses means the expression of feelings or psychological reactions to attitude object, and conation is the behavioral inclinations, intentions, commitments, and actions with respect to the attitude object<sup>6</sup>. Another popular term of the categorization is cognitive, affective, and behavioral<sup>7</sup>. Those three aspects of attitude is used also in this current study.

Many studies had been conducted in the matter of language learner attitude with various participants and settings. In Indonesian context, several studies has been carried out to investigate learners' attitude from elementary school to senior high school. In the area of elementary school students, Herwiana and Laili<sup>8</sup> conducted a research using qualitative approach to find out elementary students' attitude toward English. The result showed that most of the students have positive attitude towards English, but they competence in learning English is poor. Then, the research in the area of junior high school student where the characteristics of the participants differ with elementary students had conducted by Yandi<sup>9</sup>, Umah<sup>10</sup>, Isti and Istikharoh<sup>11</sup>, and Pelu<sup>12</sup>.

Yandi<sup>13</sup> investigated attitude of 32 eighth grade SMPN 1 Banyubiru students and found that most students had positive attitude toward English subjects inside and outside classroom, Umah<sup>14</sup> also invited 33 students' eighth grade of SMPN 14 Pekanbaru to explore their attitude toward learning English. She also found that student had positive attitude towards English learning that influenced by students' teacher and parent factor. Isti and Istikharoh<sup>15</sup> conducted study on attitude to seventh grade students of SMPN 2 Sokaraja with 93 participants. Same with other studies, students had positive attitude in behavioral, cognitive, and affective aspects. In addition, Pelu<sup>16</sup> took participant from nine grade students consisted of 50 students to see their attitude toward English teacher, English material, and English classroom management. The result showed that the students have positive attitude toward English teacher and English material, and neutral attitude toward English classroom management. Among those studies, he conducted the study in Islamic junior high school setting.

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<sup>4</sup> Liu, Y., Motivation and Attitude: Two Important Non-intelligence Factors to Arouse Students' Potentialities in Learning English. *Creative Education* 5, (2014), p. 1252; Iskhaki Andre Muhammad Maburur, *Investigating Indonesian Junior High School Students Attitude and Motivation towards English Language Learning*, (Master Thesis: University of Muhammadiyah Purwokerto, 2022), p. 3

<sup>5</sup> Icek Ajzen, *Attitude, Personality and Behavior* (2nd Ed.), (New York: Open University Press, 2005), p. 3

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*, p. 4-5

<sup>7</sup> Salem Saleh Khalaf Ibnian. "Attitudes of Public and Private Schools' Students towards Learning EFL", *International Journal of Education*, Vol. 9 No. 2, (2017); Meul Isti and Lutfi Istikharoh, "EFL Students' Attitude Toward Learning English", *Journal Sains Sosial dan Humaniora*, Vol. 3 No 1 (September, 2019), p. 96

<sup>8</sup> S Herwiana, E N Laili, "Students' Attitude Towards English Language Learning", *Journal of Educational Method and Technology* Vol. 2 No. 3 (Desember 2019)

<sup>9</sup> Freda Dyah Ayu Kusumaning Yandi, *Attitude Towards Learning English: A Study of Second Year Students at Banyubiru 1 State Junior High School*, (Thesis: Satya Wacana Christian University, 2015)

<sup>10</sup> Nurlaili Hudatul Umah, *An Analysis of Students' Attitudes toward Learning English at State Junior High School 14 Pekanbaru*, (Thesis: State Islamic University of Sultan Syarif Kasim Riau, 2018)

<sup>11</sup> Meul Isti and Lutfi Istikharoh, "EFL Students' Attitude Toward Learning English", *Journal Sains Sosial dan Humaniora*, Vol. 3 No 1 (September, 2019)

<sup>12</sup> Hanafi Pelu, "The Students' Attitude Towards English Classroom Environment of Madrasah Tsanawiyah Negeri Model Makassar 2018/2019", *Andragogi Jurnal Diklat Teknis* Vol 7 No. 1 (Juni 2019)

<sup>13</sup> Freda Dyah Ayu Kusumaning Yandi, *Attitude Towards.....*

<sup>14</sup> Nurlaili Hudatul Umah, *An Analysis of Students'.....*

<sup>15</sup> Meul Isti and Lutfi Istikharoh, "EFL Students' Attitude...."

<sup>16</sup> Hanafi Pelu, "The Students' Attitude....."

Recent studies were carried out by Al-Hafiedz IT<sup>17</sup> who found positive attitude of 30 students from SMP Nasional Makassar. Also, in his master thesis, Mabur<sup>18</sup> investigate students' attitude boarder by inviting five junior high schools to participate with the research. The finding also showed that students have an overall positive attitude though with moderate mean values on various aspects. Moreover, Susanti and Mujid<sup>19</sup>; and Utami, Ratnadewi, and Yuniarti<sup>20</sup> took senior high school setting to distribute their research instruments about students attitude and also found positive attitude as the conclusion of their studies.

All of the studies showed that students across the level of education have positive toward learning English. It indicates that all students aware of the position of English as most international language used nowadays and show positive attitude when learning the language. The existence of smartphone also contributes to their awareness of English language that really related to their age now. On the other hand, the study conducted in Islamic secondary school is still limited. Only the study of Hanafi Pelu was conducted in such setting. Hence, the researcher of the current study intended to add more theoretical contribution to the area of students' attitude with Islamic background.

## **B. Methodology**

This study was intended to investigate students' attitudes toward learning English of Islamic Junior School that divided into three categories: behavior, cognitive, and affective aspects. In this study, the design of quantitative surveys conducted using descriptive methods. As Creswell stated that survey research designs are procedures in quantitative research in which investigators administer a survey to a sample or to the entire population of people to describe the attitudes, opinions, behaviors, or characteristics of the population<sup>21</sup>. Instrument used in this study is adopted from Desi Hardiani Harahap<sup>22</sup>, which consists of 25 items under three aspects of attitude. The questionnaire was distributed to 125 students of MTsN 2 Amuntai, Hulu Sungai Utara regency. The data analysed by using descriptive statistic involved the frequency.

## **C. Result**

The data of the questionnaire then analysed by using descriptive analysis to see whether the students give positive or negative response toward learning English based on behavior, cognitive, and affective aspect.

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<sup>17</sup> Z. Moh Radhi Al-Hafiedz IT, Students' Attitude towards English Language Learning of 3RD Grade Students Of SMP Nasional Makassar, (Thesis: Alauddin State Islamic University Of Makassar, 2020)

<sup>18</sup> Iskhaki Andre Muhammad Mabur, *Investigating Indonesian Junior High Scholl Students Attitude and Motivation towards English Language Learning*, (Master Thesis: University of Muhammadiyah Purwokerto, 2022)

<sup>19</sup> Elis Susanti dan AM Mujid, "A Study of Students' Attitude toward Learning English of The Tenth Graders In SMAN 1 Abung Semuli Lampung Utara", *Jurnal Elsa*, Vol. 17 No. 1 (April 2019).

<sup>20</sup> Eka Ayu Rizki Utami, *et al.*, "The Language Attitude of Islamic Boarding School Students toward English", *Journal of Education and Learning (EduLearn)* Vol. 14 No. 2 (May 2020)

<sup>21</sup> John W. Creswell, *Educational Research: Planning, Conducting, and Evaluating Quantitative and Qualitative Research (4<sup>th</sup> edition)*, (New York: Pearson, 2012), p. 376

<sup>22</sup>Desi Hardiani Harahap, *The Correlation Of Students' Attitude and Students' English Achievement at Grade VIII SMP Negeri 9 Padangsidumpuan*, (Thesis: Padangsidumpuan, 2015)

**Table 1. Descriptive Statistics**

Aspect	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Behavioral	125	3.66	.555
Cognitive	125	3.58	.543
Affective	125	3.26	.478
Mean	125	3.50	.525

The result of descriptive analysis above shows that the overall mean score of English language attitude among the participants is 3.5 (SD = 0.525). This result reveals that the participants have a positive attitude toward learning English. Moreover, the mean scores of the three aspects of attitudes toward English among the respondents differ. As seen in Table 1, the mean score of behavioral is 3.66 (SD = 0.555), that of the cognitive is 3.58 (SD = 0.543) and the mean score of responses regarding the affective is 3.26 (SD = 0.478).

### 1. The behavioral aspect of attitude toward learning English

**Table 2. Students' behavior attitude toward learning English (%)**

No	Statements	SA	A	N	D	SD
1	I wrote notes about the material that has been taught by the teacher so that I can understand it better.	44.8	40.0	14.4	0.8	0
2	I always do my assignments and submit them on time.	24	40	33.6	2.4	
3	I never cheated on an English exam.	17.6	25.6	41.6	11.2	4
4	I am ashamed to speak English in front of the class.	24	31.2	28	15.2	1.6
5	Read English books, dictionaries, magazines and English newspapers will increase my vocabulary.	27.2	36	26.4	6.4	4
6	If I have a problem or difficulty about English, I always ask the English teacher.	27.2	42.4	27.2	3.2	0
7	I take English courses outside of school to improve my skills.	2.4	9.6	44.8	37.6	5.6

Students show in the range from 45% strongly agreed to 27% agree that they take notes of the material taught by the teacher, do all assignments and collect them on time, read other references like magazines to increase their vocabulary, and always ask teacher if they get problems in English. However, in the range of 31% agreed and 24% strongly agreed that the students still feel ashamed to speak in the front of class. Meanwhile, 38% disagreed and 6% strongly disagree that the students take English courses outside school to improve their skill. Even, the students still doubt about the statement "*I never cheated on an English exam*" that show they once cheated when exam with 42% students choose neutral option.

## 2. The cognitive aspect of attitude toward learning English

**Table 3. Students' cognitive attitude toward learning English (%)**

No	Statements	SA	A	N	D	SD
8	English lessons do not make me busy and lazy to repeat other lessons.	16.8	33.6	39.2	7.2	3.2
9	I learned English to be insightful.	33.6	36	26.4	4	0
10	English is very important for the future because English is an international language.	38.4	40	20	0.8	0.8
11	Learning English can make it easier to get a job.	16	41.6	35.2	6.4	0.8
12	I can't sum up the important points in English lessons by myself.	2.4	30.4	49.6	16	1.6
13	English lessons are very difficult to understand.	15.2	25.6	31.2	22.4	5.6
14	I can't read books in English.	7.2	17.6	47.2	20.8	7.2
15	English lessons are important because I hope one day I can visit a foreign country where people speak English.	33.6	29.6	28.8	4.8	3.2
16	Mastering English well can help me in other subjects.	11.2	34.4	41.6	11.2	1.6
17	I have a lot of knowledge when learning English.	14.4	40	40	4.8	0.8
18	English lesson is not a very difficult subject compared to other subjects.	14.4	29.6	39.2	12.8	4

Students stated that they 30% to 42% agreed for the all the statements except the statement "*I can't read books in English*". Around 35% strongly agreed that they learn English to be insightful and very important for them because it is an international language and they want go aboard. Meanwhile, for several statements related to material of the English content, many of the students choose neutral option with the range of 31% to 50%. Also, it seems that many students still not get the idea about statement number 16 to 18, so it can be admitted if majority of them choose neutral option as their respond to those statements.

## 3. The affective aspect of attitude toward learning English

**Table 4. Students' affective attitude toward learning English (%)**

No	Statements	SA	A	N	D	SD
19	I am very happy and never get bored of learning English in class.	16	27.2	48	6.6	3.2
20	I really enjoy practicing my English skills and I don't care if I'm wrong.	15.2	24.8	48.8	24.8	15.2
21	I like to communicate in English.	4.8	18.4	56	16.8	4
22	Learning English makes I excited to learn.	12.8	21.6	52.8	11.2	1.6
23	I feel anxious when speaking in English.	8.8	34.4	40	16	0.8
24	I learned English to be more confident.	7.2	41.6	44	41	7.2
25	I'm not confident in speaking English.	14.4	20	35.2	25.2	4.8

In this data, it seems that students try to be a neutral person in all of the statements related to their affective when learning English at class. For example when it related to their real feelings when studying and their performances. It also support by the statement which 34.4% agreed and 8.8% strongly agreed that they get anxiety when speaking in English at class. Most of the neutral option is in the range of 44% to 56%. On the other hand, the total score of strongly agreed and agreed is higher than the total score of disagree and strongly disagree (38% vs 26%). It indicates that although students tend to be neutral between positive and negative attitude, the attitude still direct to positive attitude in the class.

#### **D. Discussion**

Exploring Islamic junior high school students' attitude among behavioral, cognitive, and affective aspects is the aim of this study. Descriptive analysis of this study showed that the students have had positive attitude toward learning English at school. Specifically, students acted positively in the aspect of behavioral and cognition that related to their action when learning, and their perception toward learning English. Moreover, students tend to be neutral person when regarding to affective attitude. Affective refers to emotional aspect of attitude that cover some indicators like students' responses in learning English and habits of practicing English language<sup>23</sup>. In this case, students pretend to be in neutral position.

In the aspect of behavioral, students agreed that they take note while learning with English teacher, always do all assignments, asking for help if they get any difficult about English, and certain activities like reading book and magazine will increase their vocabulary, but the students tend to neutral related to cheating issues and taking English course outside school. This indicates that Islamic students still aware that they should not lie if they once cheating on English exam, so they pretend to answer neutral option as the representative of their attitude. Then, students believed that English as important international language to be mastered to get bright hope in future such as getting a better job and visit foreign countries where people speak English although some of them still argue that English lesson is very difficult to understand. These finding in cognitive aspects is corroborate with Al-Hafiedz IT<sup>24</sup> that also found that students agreed that English is important for their future life and career.

The last aspect of attitude is affective aspect where majority of the students pretend to be a neutral in most of the items. Since affective connects with the expression of feelings or psychological reactions, the statements like *I happy when learning English*, *I enjoy practicing English skills*, and *I like to communicate in English* made students seem to hide their real feeling toward learning English. Students tried to say that they were happy and also unhappy at the same time. Their pattern in responding to statements in this aspect is same. This finding indicates that the students do not want their true feeling toward learning English is aware by researcher and their English teacher.

The overall finding of this study is in line with study conducted by Pelu<sup>25</sup> where Islamic students tend to have positive attitude for several aspects but also neutral in another aspect. Same with a study carried out in public junior high school, as revealed by Isti and Istikharoh<sup>26</sup> with 93 respondents, students showed positive attitude toward learning English at school. However, the fact that the mean score of students' attitude in this finding tend to be neutral probably caused by the statements in the questionnaire that make students hide their true feeling

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<sup>23</sup>Hasyim Zaini, *Desain Pembelajaran Perguruan Tinggi*, (2002), p.74-76; Syeh Hawib Hamzah.. "Aspek Pengembangan Peserta Didik (Kognitif, Afektif, Psikomotorik)". *Dinamika Ilmu* Vol 12. No. 1. (2012)

<sup>24</sup> Z. Moh Radhi Al-Hafiedz IT, *Students' Attitude* .....

<sup>25</sup> Hanafi Pelu, "The Students' Attitude....."

<sup>26</sup> Meul Isti and Lutfi Istikharoh, "EFL Students' Attitude..."

in responding them. Overall, this finding of the current study is in line with all studies mention previously in the area of junior high school students.

## E. Conclusion

In conclusion, Indonesian Islamic Junior high school students have positive attitude toward learning English (M = 3.5). Regarding to three aspects of attitude, positive attitude shows in behavioral and cognitive aspect, while neutral attitude shows in affective aspect. This finding suggests English teacher to keep and improve his way in teaching English to maintain students' positive attitude toward learning English. Then, since negative attitude is still exist although with low score, English teacher should be aware of this and act properly to change their attitude to be positive in order to achieve learning goal that increase their performance and achievement in English subject.

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