

## LANGUAGE ATTITUDES OF INDONESIANS AS EFL LEARNERS, GENDER, AND SOCIO-ECONOMIC STATUS

**Dirtya Sunyi Paradewari and Concilianus Laos Mbato**

Sanata Dharma University, Yogyakarta, Indonesia

[gisellarin@gmail.com](mailto:gisellarin@gmail.com) and [c.laosmbato67@gmail.com](mailto:c.laosmbato67@gmail.com)

DOI: [doi.org/10.24071/llt.2018.210112](https://doi.org/10.24071/llt.2018.210112)

Received 15 February 2018; revised 2 March 2018; accepted 20 March 2018

### **Abstract**

This study explored the language attitude in terms of gender and socio-economic status (SES) in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. The aim of this study was to find out the relationships among five components of languages attitudes in terms of gender and socio-economic status (SES). There were 256 participants from four universities in Yogyakarta. The participants were asked to fill out a questionnaire about the language used and general language attitudes through the Google Form. The results showed that there are five components of language attitudes; 1) Indonesian learners showed positive language attitudes toward English (3.58); 2) positive language attitudes toward Indonesian (3.66); 3) positive language attitudes toward English and negative language attitudes toward Indonesian (3.52); 4) positive language attitudes toward Indonesian and negative language attitudes toward English (3.58); 5) positive language attitudes toward English and Indonesian (3.91). These five components of language attitudes were then correlated with gender; 1) gender was positively related to English language attitude where female learners had higher positive language attitudes than males did toward English (.097); 2) there was no relation between gender and Indonesian language attitude (-.071). In addition, SES was also related to five (5) components of language attitudes in which the learners who came from upper class had higher positive language attitudes towards English (.155) than learners who came from lower class. On the other hand, the correlation between SES and Indonesian language showed the learners from middle class had higher positive language attitudes (.031) than the learners from upper class and lower class.

Keywords: language attitudes, gender, socio-economic status

### **Introduction**

This research is part of a research project on language attitudes conducted by the research team at Sanata Dharma University. The other two articles focus on language attitudes and instrumental orientation, and language attitudes and educational background. There will be a similarity in terms of language attitudes across the three articles. Results about language attitudes across the three studies are the same. However, this study focused on language attitudes and their correlations with gender and socio-economic status. The research by Kharismawan and Mbato investigated the correlation between language attitudes and language orientation, as well as language orientation, and gender and SES.

The research by Kurniasari and Mbato, on the other hand, looked at language attitudes and their correlations with educational background.

English is one of the most widely used world languages today (Eskicumali & Turedi, 2010) with around two billion people learn English. English is learnt not only for the communication but also for the bridge between the national and global context (Penjak & Karninčić, 2015). Learning English as a foreign language helps to build the sense of human beings and construct the identity among learners (Gardner, 2001).

English language is used in the various fields of politics, economics, technology, diplomacy, international trade and industry, commerce, education, science, information, and popular culture (Crystal, 2003; Huda, 2000; Lauder, 2008; Jenkins, 2003). Particularly in education, a large number of scientific papers published are in English. Moreover, English is used as the medium of instruction in schools and universities. Furthermore, English skill is needed as the requirements of some job vacancy.

In Indonesia, English is learnt as a foreign language. The status of English as foreign language cannot be separated from colonialism. Indonesia was colonized by the Dutch over 350 years (1596-1942). During the Dutch colonialism, only few Indonesians obtained a good education. Elite schools only accepted some selected local children whose parents were in the high position in the government to be their students. Gregory (1964, p. 15) states that only indigenous children attending these schools were taught as English as a foreign language. English was first taught to Indonesians in 1914 (Lauder, 2008).

During the Second World War, Indonesia was colonized by Japanese for three and a half years (1942-1945) where the teaching of English was prohibited. Then, Dutch returned to Indonesia after the Japanese defeated. Indonesian won its independence from the Dutch on August 17, 1945 and made English the first foreign language to be taught at school replacing Dutch (Darjowidjojo, 2003). Since then, English language has been taught as a foreign language at various educational levels in Indonesia. However, English has never been officially used as a medium of communication. Therefore, Indonesian people rarely speak in English outside the classroom learning contexts. Lack of use in the real communication may become one of the reasons why Indonesian people tend to use non-standard form in speaking English (see Kirkpatrick, 2010).

Learners' attitudes play a significant role in learning English a foreign language. Attitudes are how people feel about the language (Crystal, 1997, p. 215) and is "a construct that elucidates linguistic behaviours or in particular" (Mamun et al., 2012, p. 201). The attitudes can be positive or negative (Ellis, 1994, p. 1997) and both of them may influence people in learning L2. Some of them may feel happy to learn L2 while others may not (Ellis, 1994, p. 201).

Numerous studies of language attitudes have been conducted (Penjak & Karninčić, 2015; Eskicumali & Turedi, 2010; Mamun et al., 2012). In conducting this research, the researchers were motivated by the study which had done by Sicam and Lucas (2016). To some extent, this study was a replication of Sicam and Lucas' study (2016). While Sicam and Lucas investigated the relationship between language attitudes and language orientation towards Filipino and English,

this study attempted to explore the language attitudes towards Indonesian and English in terms of gender and socio-economic status (SES) of Indonesian students studying in several universities in Yogyakarta, Indonesia where English is learnt as a foreign language. In particular, this study aimed to find out about the relationship between language attitudes, gender, and socio-economic status. This study attempted to answer two research questions, namely, firstly: What are Indonesian university students' general language attitudes towards Indonesian and English? Secondly is there any significant relationship between Indonesian university students' general language attitudes towards Indonesian and English in terms of gender and social economic status?

### ***Language Attitude***

Kendler (1974) notes that attitude is a willingness to accept or avoid positive or negative things such as social, personal, situations, ideas, and concepts. The characteristics of behaviour language are divided into two types, namely: language and non-language attitude (Anderson, 1984, p. 37). The language attitude is a catalyst to have a successful language learning (Fasold, 1984, p. 36). Language attitude might be a positive or negative depending on how people learn the language (Chaer & Agustina, 2010). Zeinivan, Azizifar, and Gowhary (2015) also assert that language attitude is the internal stage which influence people to do what they want to do.

Brown (2000) employs the term of language attitude as the set of beliefs that the learner holds. A successful learner is a learner who perceives a positive attitudes towards the target language (Prodromou, 1992). Dittmar (1976) reveals four characteristics of language attitude, i.e. the selection of primary language that people use in a multilingual community, the distribution of the language, the differences of dialect, and the interaction among individuals based on the common problems that arise. Accordingly, language attitude is “an umbrella term, which refers to various attitudinal objects, including languages, dialects, speech styles, speakers, communities, language learning, and language use” (Ianos et al, 2015, p. 2).

### ***Gender***

Simaki et al. (2016, p. 868) assert that people with different gender tend to have different style of linguistic. Women and men use different language styles depending on the situation (Edlund et al, 2007) and women usually do better than men in learning the language (Ellis, (1994). Dornyei, Csizer, and Nemeth (2006) also note that women are more motivated than men in learning a foreign language. Several studies have found gender differences in language attitude. One of the examples come from Ladegaard (1998; 2000). The result of the research showed that the female participants had the higher positive attitudes towards Standard Danish (SD) than male participants had. In addition, Wang & Ladegaard (2010, p. 16) state that women use the high prestige variety of a language while men use the local vernacular.

### ***Socio-economic Status***

Parson, Hinson, and Sardo-Brown (2001) define the socio-economic status as the term to distinguish between people' position in the society in terms of family

income, educational background, and occupational prestige. The social classes are classified as upper, middle, and lower class (Ariani & Ghafournia, 2015).

Lamb (2012) asserts that socio-economic status has an impact on the learners in learning languages. Ellis (1994) also adds that there is the connection between the social class and achievement; particularly it comes from the level of education, income, and occupation (p. 204). Students with the high social and economic status are called as successful students and students with the low social and economic status are called unsuccessful students (Barry, 2005; Ewijk & Slegers, 2010).

### Method

To some extent, this study was replication of a quantitative study by Sicam and Lucas (2016) on language attitudes of adolescent Filipino bilingual learners towards English and Filipino. In order to collect data, the current study employed a survey method in the form of a questionnaire. The researcher utilized Google Form to distribute the questionnaire because the participants were separated in some areas of Yogyakarta, Indonesia. The participants of this study were 256 students (184 females and 72 males) from one state universities and three private universities in Yogyakarta. In this study, the participants were invited to participate voluntarily and were assured that the information collected was confidential. This study employed a questionnaire adapted from Sicam and Lucas (2016) to suit Indonesian contexts and consisted of two parts; demographic background information and language attitudes. There were 26 statements about language attitudes towards Indonesian and English. The questionnaire was written in Indonesian rather than English to avoid misunderstanding when the participants filled it out. In order to answer the questionnaire, the participants were instructed to respond to the items on a 5-point Semantic Differential Scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) as depicted in Table 1 below.

**Table 1. Items Distribution of the Questionnaire**

	<b>Components</b>	<b>Number of Item</b>	<b>Total</b>
Language Attitudes	Positive towards English	1, 5, 7, 8, 14, 23, 24	7
	Positive towards Indonesian	4, 18, 26	3
	Positive towards English and negative towards Indonesian	3, 6, 11, 12, 9	5
	Positive towards Indonesian and negative towards English	2, 10, 13, 20	4
	Positive towards English and Indonesian	15, 16, 17, 19, 21, 22, 25	7
	<b>Total</b>		

### Findings and Discussion

In line with the research question, this section focused on general language attitudes towards Indonesian and English, and on the correlation between learners'

language attitudes towards Indonesian and English in terms of gender and socio-economic status (SES) respectively.

***General Language Attitudes towards Indonesian and English***

Five categories of language attitudes towards English and Indonesian were calculated to answer the research problem. The mean of each category and the comparisons of means between the categories are presented in Table 2.

**Table 2. General Attitudes towards Indonesian and English**

Attitude	Mean	SD
Positive towards English and Indonesian	3.91	1.02
Positive towards Indonesian	3.66	0.93
Positive towards English	3.58	0.98
Positive towards Indonesia and negative towards English	3.58	0.92
Positive towards English and negative towards Indonesian	3.52	0.99

Note: Scale: 0–1.0 = very low attitude; 1.1–2.0 = low attitude; 2.1–3.0 = moderate attitude; 3.1–4.0 = high attitude; 4.1–5.0 = very high attitude

The table indicates that the participants have a high positive attitude towards English and Indonesian languages ( $M = 3.91$ ). This finding supported studies by Sicam and Lucas (2016); Fuentes and Mojica (1999); and Pascasio (1980) who found that second language learners had high positive attitudes towards English and their first languages. Then the second highest mean was positive towards Indonesian ( $M = 3.66$ ) in which the learners are using their first language, Indonesian. The learners also had the positive attitudes toward English ( $M = 3.58$ ). The score was the same as positive attitudes towards Indonesia and negative towards English, while the score of SD of positive attitudes towards English was higher than the other one. The lowest score came from the positive attitudes towards English and negative towards Indonesian ( $M = 3.52$ ).

In addition, based on 23 items about language attitudes, there were five (5) statements which obtain a high attitude. Among those five statements, three statements referred to the positive attitudes towards English and Indonesian. It can be seen in Table 3.

**Table 3. Statements with the High Rating**

Number	Statement	Mean	SD
15	Speaking English helps people to get a job.	4.27	0.91
12	When Indonesian people attend international conferences, he feels confident because he has facility with the use of English rather than Indonesian.	4.16	0.89
21	To be an efficient government official, one must be proficient in both English and Indonesian.	4.11	0.92
19	Speaking both English and Indonesian help people get promotions in their jobs.	4.04	0.93
1	Modernization and advancement can be better achieved through the use of English.	4.03	0.98

Most of the participants strongly agree with the statement that English and Indonesian can help them to get a job ( $M = 4.27$ ) and to be promoted in a job ( $M$

= 4.04). It is realized that nowadays, Indonesian learners considered English as an instrument in getting a job. It was supported by Arslan and Akbarov (2012) who state that, "Most of the students believe that English will be useful in their future job. It is in line with the general belief that knowing English opens door to jobs" (p. 27). This study also shows the use of English and Indonesia language in different contexts as presented in Table 4.

**Table 4. Language Used in Different Context**

No	Context	Language(s) used	Percentage
1	Home		
	a) talking to father	Indonesia	69.14 %
	b) talking to mother	Indonesia	71.48 %
	c) talking to brother/ sister	Indonesia	55.86 %
2	School		
	a) talking to classmates	In Indonesia and English equally	37.89 %
	b) talking to lecturer/ teacher	In Indonesia and English equally	31.64 %
3	Community		
	a) talking to neighbors	Indonesia	89.45 %
4	Media		
	a) watching TV programs	In Indonesia and English equally	40.23 %
	b) watching movies	In Indonesia and English equally	47.27 %
	c) reading newspapers/ magazines	In Indonesia and English equally	42.58 %
	d) reading educational books	In Indonesia and English equally	53.13 %
	e) reading comics/ fiction books	In Indonesia and English equally	37.50 %
	f) listening to music	In Indonesia and English equally	44.14 %
	g) listening to radio programs	In Indonesia more than in English	39.06 %

In the context of family, the participants preferred to use Indonesian to speak each other. In contrast, the participants preferred to use both English and Indonesian equally in the context of the school/ university and the place where they worked. In terms of using media, when the participants were watching TV, watching movies, reading the newspaper, reading educational books, reading fiction books, and listening to music, they preferred to use both Indonesia and English equally. Nevertheless, when they were listening to the radio, they used Indonesian rather than English.

***Correlation between Learners' Language Attitude towards Indonesia and English in terms of Gender and Socio-economic Status (SES)***

In this section, the researchers investigated the correlation between learners' language attitudes in terms of gender and SES. The researchers employed a paired-sample t test to find the correlation between language attitude and the variables. The results can be seen in Table 5.

**Table 5. Correlation Matrix of Language Attitudes, Gender and SES.**

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1 Gender							
2 SES		.025					

3	Positive towards English	.097	.155
4	Positive towards Indonesia	-.071	.031
5	Positive towards English and negative towards Indonesia	-.038	.259
6	Positive towards Indonesia and negative towards English	-.122	.085
7	Positive towards English and Indonesia	-.025	.069

Based on the result, it showed that gender had a positive and significant correlation with positive English attitude. Specifically, there is a difference score between male ( $M= 3.49$ ) and female ( $M= 3.62$ ). This result also supported the studies made by Sicam and Lucas (2016); Wang and Ladegaard (2010); and Dornyei, Csizer, and Nemeth (2006) which claim that female learners had a higher positive attitude in learning English than male learners.

On the other hand, this study also found that socio-economic status (SES) had a significant correlation with all of the language attitude components. In addition, the score of components towards SES level presented in Table 6.

**Table 6. Mean Score of the Language Attitude based on SES**

No	Components	Lower Class	Middle Class	Upper Class
1	Positive towards English	3.59	3.45	3.77
2	Positive towards Indonesia	3.48	3.75	3.61
3	Positive towards English and negative towards Indonesia	3.34	3.40	3.78
4	Positive towards Indonesia and negative towards English	3.40	3.62	3.60
5	Positive towards English and Indonesia	3.92	3.84	4.00

Table 6 clearly showed that SES had the impact on learners' attitude in learning the language. According to Lamb (2010), socio-economic status has the impact on the learners in learning languages. Specifically, the learners who were included in the upper class had higher positive language attitude towards English than lower and middle class. Moreover, Kahn-Horwitz et al. (2006) described that the students with the high socio-economic status had a sense of the importance of English as foreign learners.

### Conclusion

Based on the result, it shows that language attitudes diverge among different groups of Indonesian adults. Firstly, these finding refers to the high positive attitude towards Indonesian and English languages. The use of Indonesian as the preferred language in the family context is proven in this study. Moreover, both English and Indonesia are equally used in the context of the school/ university and the place of work and media use. Secondly, the study revealed that there is a correlation between learners' language attitude towards Indonesian and English in

terms of gender. This finding is an agreement with the findings from Sicam and Lucas (2016); Wang and Ladegaard (2010); and Dörnyei, Csizer, and Nemeth (2006) which claimed that female learners had a higher positive attitude in learning English than male learners.

### References

- Anderson, B. R. O. G. (1984). Gagasan tentang kekuasaan dalam kebudayaan Jaw. In M. Budiardjo (Ed.). *Aneka pemikiran tentang kuasa dan wibawa*. Jakarta: Pustaka Sinar Harapan.
- Ariani, M. G. & Ghafournia, N. (2015). The relationship between socio-economic status and beliefs about language learning: A study of Iranian postgraduate EAP students. *English Language Teaching*, 8(9), 17-25.
- Arslan, M. U. & Akbarov, A. (2012). EFL learners perceptions and attitudes towards English for the specific purposes. *Acta Didactica Napocensia*, 5, (-).
- Barry, J. (2005). *The effect of socio-economic status on academic achievement*. Department of Sociology, Wichita KS: Wichita State University.
- Brown, H. D. (2000). *Principles of language learning and teaching* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). NJ: Prentice-Hall Englewood Cliffs.
- Chaer, A. & Agustina, L. (2010). *Sociolinguistik: Perkenalanawal*. Jakarta: Rineke Cipta.
- Creswell, J. W. (2012). *Educational research* (4<sup>th</sup> ed.). Boston, MA: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Crystal, D. (2003). *English as a global language* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Crystal, D. (1997). *English as a global language*. Cambridge: University Press.
- Dardjowidjojo, S. (2003). The role of English in Indonesia: A dilemma. In Sukamto, K.E. (Ed.), *Rampai bahasa, pendidikan dan budaya: Kumpulan esai Soenjono Dardjowidjojo* (pp. 41-50). Jakarta: Yayasan Obor Indonesia.
- Dittmar, N. (1976). *Sociolinguistics*. London: Edwar Arnold.
- Dörnyei, Z., Csizér, K., & Németh, N. (2006). *Motivation, language attitudes and globalisation: A Hungarian perspective*. Buffalo, NY: Multilingual Matters.
- Edlund, A. C., Erson, E., & Milles, K. (2007). *Språk och kön*. Stockholm: Norstedts Akademiska Förlag.
- Ellis, R. (1994). *The study of second language acquisition*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Eskicumalı, A. & Türedi, H. (2010). The rise of English teaching in Turkish curriculum. *International Online Journal of Educational Sciences*, 2(3), 738-771.
- Ewijk, R. V. & Slegers, P. (2010). The effect of peer SES on students achievement: A meta-analysis. *Journal of Educational Research Review*, 5(2), 134-150.
- Fasold, R. (1984). *The sociolinguistics of society*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

- Fuentes, G. & Mojica, L. (1999). A study of the language attitudes of selected Filipino bilingual students toward Filipino and English. In M. L. S. Bautista, & G. O. Tan (Eds.) *The Filipino Bilingual: A multidisciplinary perspective: A festschrift in honor of Emy M. Pascasio* (pp. 50–55). Manila: Linguistic Society of Philippines.
- Gardner, R. (2001). Integrative motivation and second language acquisition. In: Z. Dornyei, and R. W. Schmidt, (Eds), *Motivation and Second Language Acquisition*. Honolulu: University of Hawai'i.
- Graddol, D. (2006). *English next: Why global English may mean the end of "English as a foreign language"*. The British Council.
- Gregory, O. D. (1964). *Three projects in English in Indonesia*. Jakarta: The Ford Foundation.
- Huda, N. (2000). Kedudukan dan fungsi bahasa asing (The position and function of foreign languages). In H. Alwi and D. Sugono. *Politik Bahasa: Risalah Seminar Politik Bahasa (Language Politics: Proceedings of the Seminar on Language Politics)*, 59-78.
- Ianos, M. A., Hugueta, A., Janes, J., & Lapresta, C. (2015). Can language attitudes be improved? A longitudinal study of immigrant students in Catalonia (Spain). *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism*, 1-16. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13670050.2015.1051508>
- Jenkins, J. (2003). *World Englishes: A resource book for students*. Routledge English Language Introductions Series. London: Routledge.
- Kahn-Horwitz, J., Shimron, J., & Sparks, R. (2006). Weak and strong novice readers of English as a foreign language: Effects of first language and socio-economic status. *Annals of Dyslexia*, 56, 161–185.
- Kendler, H. H. (1974). *Basic psychology*. Philippines: Benjamin/ Cummings.
- Krech, D., Ballachey, E. L., & Crutchfield, R. S. (1975). *Individual in society: A textbook of social psychology*. Barkley: Mc. Graw-Hill.
- Ladegaard, H. J. (1998). Boys, girls, language and identity: Language attitudes and linguistic behaviour in rural community in Denmark. *International Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 8(1), 3–25.
- Ladegaard, H. J. (2000). Language attitudes and sociolinguistic behaviour: Exploring attitude-behaviour relations in language. *Journal of Sociolinguistics*, 4(2), 214–233.
- Lamb, M. (2012). A self-system perspective on young adolescents' motivation to learn English in rural and urban settings. *Language Learn*, 62, 997-1023.
- Lauder, A. (2008). The status and function of English in Indonesia: A review of key factors. *Makara, Sosial Humaniora*, 12(1), 9-20.
- Mamun, S. A., Rahman, A. R. M. M., Rahman, A. R. M. M., & Hossain, M. A. (2012). Students' attitudes towards English: The case of life science school of Khulna University. *International Review of Social Sciences and Humanities*, 3(1), 200-209.
- Parson, R. D., Hinson, S. L., & Sardo-Brown, D. (2001). *Educational psychology: A practitioner- researcher. Model of Teaching*. Singapore: Thomson Learning Inc.

- Pascasio, E. (1980). Language attitudes and motivations of Filipino bilinguals towards Pilipino and English: The Philippine context. In E. Afendras. (Ed.) *Patterns of Bilingualism* (pp. 120–184). Anthology Series No. 8. Singapore: SEAMEO Regional Language Centre, Singapore University Press.
- Penjak, A. & Karninčić, H. (2015). Attitudes, motivation and parental encouragement in learning English as a foreign language: the Croatian context. *Journal of Foreign Languages, Cultures, and Civilizations*, 3(2), 17-23.
- Prodromou, L. (1992). What culture? Which culture? Cross-cultural factors in language learning. *ELT Journal*, 46(1), 39-50.
- Sicam, F. P. M. & Lucas, R. I. G. (2016). Language attitudes of adolescent Filipino bilingual learners towards English and Filipino. *Asian Englishes*. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13488678.2016.1179474>
- Simaki, V., Mporas, I., & Megalooikonomou, V. (2016). Evaluation and sociolinguistic analysis of text features for gender and age identification. *American Journal of Engineering and Applied Sciences*, 9(4), 868-876. <http://dx.doi.org/10.3844/ajeassp.2016.868.876>
- Wang, L. & Ladegaard, H. J. (2010). Language attitudes and gender in China: Perceptions and reported use of Putonghua and Cantonese in the Southern Province of Guangdong. *Language Awareness*, 17(1), 57-77.
- Zeinivand, T., Azizifar, A., & Gowhary, H. (2015). The relationship between attitude and speaking proficiency of Iranian ELF learners: The case of Darrehshehr city. *Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 199, 240-247.