JURNAL ILMIAH

Bina EDUKASI

Keguruan, Ilmu Pendidikan dan Pengajaran

Fakultas Keguruan dan Ilmu Pendidikan
Universitas Bina Darma

THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN LEARNING ATTITUDES AND ENGLISH ACHIEVEMENT OF ENGLISH DEPARTMENT STUDENTS IN PALEMBANG

Fitria Aprilia
Dosen Universitas Bina Darma
Jalan Jenderal Ahmad Yani No.3 Palembang
Sur-el: fitria_aprilia@binadarma.ac.id

Abstract: *Language learning attitudes (LLA) becomes one of the most crucial issues in educational field. The aim of this study is to investigate the relationships between students' LLA and their English achievement (EA). To achieve the aim, the attitude questionnaire and the students' grade point average (GPA) of English subjects were administered to a group of 103 students of English Education Study Programs in Palembang. To analyze the data, Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was used and the results showed significant correlations between students' (1) $LLA_{(total)}$ and their EA, and (2) positive attitude and their EA. Furthermore, regression analysis in the first and third university showed that students' $LLA_{(total)}$ influences their EA for 8.9%. Meanwhile, in the second university, students' positive attitude could influence their EA for 16.3%. Finally, the interpretation and implications of the results are also discussed.*

Keywords: *language learning attitude, English achievement, undergraduate students*

Abstrak: *Sikap belajar bahasa merupakan salah satu isu penting dalam bidang pendidikan. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui hubungan antara sikap belajar bahasa dan hasil belajar siswa. Transkrip nilai dan kuesioner tentang sikap belajar bahasa diberikan kepada 103 siswa yang menjadi sampel dalam penelitian ini. Data yang didapat kemudian dianalisis menggunakan Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient. Hasil analisis menunjukkan hubungan yang signifikan antara (1) Sikap belajar$_{(total)}$ dan hasil belajar siswa, dan (2) sikap positif dan hasil belajar siswa. Selanjutnya, hasil analisis regresi pada universitas pertama dan ketiga menunjukkan bahwa sikap belajar$_{(total)}$ mempengaruhi hasil belajar sebesar 8.9%. Pada universitas kedua, sikap positif mempengaruhi hasil belajar siswa sebesar 16.3%. Pembahasan dan implikasi dari hasil tersebut dibahas lebih lengkap.*

Kata kunci*: sikap belajar bahasa, pencapaian dalam Bahasa Inggris, mahasiswa S1*

1. INTRODUCTION

Language plays a very crucial role in every aspect of human life. People always deal with language in their daily communication. Many years ago, language was learnt due to a desire to identify with and move closer to the society where the language was spoken. Graham (1997) states that nowadays, language is viewed as a means to other ends, for instance as a career enhancement or educational goals, rather than only as a means of communication. Language is probably the most difficult set of skills a person could learn. There is no easy way to master a language, particularly a language which is not the first language or the native language. In this globalization, the most important language being used among countries, institutions and individuals all over the world is still English. For a nation, the English competence of its people has a great influence on its competitive advantage (Huang, 2010). For example, higher education students, especially those who are going to be English teachers need to master

English more, since in the future they are going produce many professionals.

Unfortunately, the English achievement of the students who study English as a second or foreign language is not satisfactory yet. In Indonesia, the importance of mastering English in this globalization era is visualized by the law No. 22 of 1999 on Regional Government which mentions that each region of the district level has full autonomy to organize education for its people (Madya, Sugeng, Maarif, Supriyanti, Purbani, Basikin, & Istiqomah, 2004).

According to Syatriana, Husain, Haryanto and Jabu (2013) the English performance and competence of Indonesian secondary school students are low. The statement is supported by a fact that happens in three Madrasah in Indonesia, which are located in Western Indonesia, Java, and Eastern Indonesia. According to Ali, Kos, Lietz, Nugroho, Furqon, Zainul and Emilia (2010), across the 3 regions, student achievements in Maths, Science and English are well below the international average on items drawn from international tests such as the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA) and the Trends in International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS).

In South Sumatera, especially in Palembang, the situation is not different. Students still possess low English achievement. According to Erlina and Zuraidah (2010) the English proficiency of the non-English major students of Sriwijaya University is still low with the minimum TOEFL score of 263. And only 7.3% of the students state that they do not have any difficulties in learning English. It means 92.7% of the students still get difficulties in learning English.

The phenomena discussed before lead to a question of what actually happens to our learning that causes the low achievement of the students. In relation to learning contexts, students might have different attitudes toward language learning, especially English.

Attitude is very complex to define. The term attitude comes from Latin words *apto* (aptitude or fitness) and *acto* (postures of the body), both of which have their origin in the Sanskript root *ag*, meaning to do or to act (Caciopo, Petty, & Crites, 1994). The attitude concept has three components which cover behavioral, cognitive and affective concept (Abidin, Pour-Mohammadi, & Alzwari, 2012). These three attitudinal aspects are based on the three theoretical approaches of behaviorism, cognitivism and humanism respectively: 1) Behavioral aspect of attitude which deals with the way one behaves and reacts in particular situations.; 2) Cognitive aspect of attitude which involves the beliefs of the language learners about the knowledge that they receive and their understanding in the process of language learning.; 3) Emotional aspect of attitude that can help the learners to express whether they like or dislike the objects or surrounding situations. 4) Khamari and Guru (2013) highlight that "as a concept, an attitude always refers to an individual's or group's more or less stable and observable tendency or predisposition to perform, perceive, think and feel in relation to something specific" (p. 50). In this case, attitudes equip individual or groups with a ready-made frame or reference in accordance with

which they judge particular things. Furthermore, Ming, Ling and Jaafar (2011) state that there are two types of attitude change towards language learning; positive and negative. How attitudes towards learning are formed and how attitudes affect learning has been increasingly interest of language teachers and researchers as well. The reason is that attitude influence one's behaviors, inner mood and therefore learning. So it is clear that there is an interaction between language learning and the environmental components in which the student grew up.

The purpose of measurement of attitudes in education and instruction might be to predict the behaviors that individuals are likely to exhibit in time or in the future, and based on this prediction, change the existing ones and create new situations. Alternatively, "the factor that makes differences between underachievement and accomplishment is believed to be the language attitude" (Darabad, 2013, p. 120). Furthermore, Chalak and Kassaian (2010) highlight "language attitude is an important concept because it plays a key role in language learning and teaching" (p. 41).

Both negative and positive attitudes have a strong impact on the success of language learning. The attitude of an individual depends heavily upon different stimuli (Inal, Evin, & Saracaloglu, 2009).

Previous studies have indicated the advantages of having positive attitude. For instance, Ming *et al*. (2011) reveals an overall positive attitude towards learning English by Art and Science students. The findings reveal a positive relationship between higher proficiency level and positive attitude and motivation to learn English and students' attitudes positively correlated with their achievement in English. Furthermore, a result of a study also indicates a positive significant correlation between students' attitude towards learning and achievement motivation, and between students' attitudes and academic achievement (Bakar *et al*., 2010).

Previous studies have shown that attitudes affect students' achievement. Attitudes play major roles in learning a second or foreign language since the students' positive or negative attitudes towards learning English largely determine high or low achievement in English. This study is different from other previous studies since the focus is on the students' English achievement. Moreover, there are three different universities that the writer investigated. The focus is on the students' English achievement at the tertiary level since the English subject at tertiary level is different from the English subject in Secondary school because the students have already had their own major that they would like to focus on. Therefore, the writer in this study would like to find out whether language learning attitudes can serve as predictors of English achievement of the undergraduate students of English Education Study Programs. The writer was also interested in investigating whether language learning attitudes can be identified among the undergraduate students of English Education Study Programs, within Faculty of Teacher Training and Education of Sriwijaya University, Muhammadiyah University, and Taman Siswa University.

Particularly, the research aims to answer the questions 1) "Are there any significant

correlations among language learning attitudes$_{(total)}$, the factors of language learning attitudes and students' English Achievement?", 2)"Do language learning attitudes$_{(total)}$, and the factors of language learning attitudes influence students' English achievement?". In line with the problems of the study, the objectives are to investigate whether or not there are significant correlations among language learning attitudes$_{(total)}$, the factors of language learning attitudes and students' English Achievement. Also, to investigate whether or not language learning attitudes$_{(total)}$, and the factors of language learning attitudes influence students' English achievement.

This study can hopefully give some information to the teachers and parents to know the concepts of language learning attitudes as one of the factors that can influence the students' success or failure in their study. For the students, this study is beneficial for them to know their own learning attitudes so that they can enhance their abilities in learning. They may also become effective problem solvers and more autonomous in their learning. The last, this study is beneficial for the writer herself as an educator of English who will appreciate more on the differences of students' attitudes of learning English.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

2.1 Sample of The Study

In choosing the sample, the writer used multistage cluster sampling techniques due to the population is extremely large and not easily identified (Creswell, 2005). The sample involved in this study was the second, fourth, and sixth semester students from three different universities in Palembang (Sriwijaya University, Muhammadiyah and Taman Siswa University). The writer selected the sample by using a rule from Arikunto (2002). He elaborates that if the number of the population is large, the researcher may take 10-15% or 20-25% or more, depending on the needs of the researcher itself. From Sriwijaya University, the writer randomly took 18% of the population to be the sample, 15% of Muhammadiyah University, and 48% of Taman Siswa University. Therefore, the numbers of the sample were 44, 41, and 18 respectively. So, the total number of the sample was 103.

2.2 Instrumentation

In this study, the data were collected by using an attitude questionnaire. Before administering the questionnaire to the sample of the study, the questionnaire was piloted to the second, fourth and sixth semester students of PGRI University in order to check the reliability of the questionnaire. In this study, the reliability of the attitudes questionnaire was 0.824. Additionally, the validity used in this study was content validity in which the researcher describes the characteristics and sample items based on the content of the questionnaires.

The attitude questionnaire was administered to gain information about students' attitudes towards learning English. There were 20 items (10 positive items and 10 negative items) designed to draw out information regarding students' attitudes toward learning

English. Likert scale items ranging from *strongly disagree (1 point), disagree (2 points), undecided (3 points), agree (4 points) and strongly agree (5 points)* were used to get responses. Meanwhile, the data of English achievement were taken from the students' Grade Point Average (GPA) transcript and re-calculated since the focus was on the students' score or grade only in four English skills. The final students' GPA then categorized based on Sriwijaya University GPA and predicate standard.

2.3 Data Analyses

The data gathered from the questionnaire and the students' GPA were analyzed and processed by SPSS 17. Descriptive statistics was employed to explain the data. To study the impact of language learning attitudes on students' English achievement, Pearson product-moment correlation coefficient was applied. Furthermore, the regression analysis was used to support the correlation coefficient analysis. The writer used the F-test to test the significance. Once a value of F-obtained exceeds the value of F-table, it claims that the independent variables (students' language learning attitudes significantly determined the dependent variable (students' English achievement). In contrast, if the value of F-table exceeds the value of F-obtained, it suggests that students' language learning attitudes did not significantly determine students' English achievement.

3. FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATION

3.1 Descriptive Statistics

To study the nature of the distribution, descriptive statistics was applied. The results revealed that among the three universities and each of the university, most of the students tended to have positive attitude toward English. For English achievement, most of the students were all had very satisfactory English achievement. Table 1 sums up the descriptive results of language learning attitudes and English achievement.

Table 1. The Score Distribution of LLA and EA

Variables	Freq	%	Universities
Positive Attitude	101	98.05%	Within 3 Universities
EA	61	50.4%	
Positive Attitude	43	97.72%	Sriwijaya
EA	29	65.7%	
Positive Attitude	40	97.56%	Muham-madiyah
EA	20	48.5%	
Positive Attitude	18	100%	Taman Siswa
EA	12	66.8%	

3.2 Results of Students' Learning Attitudes and their English Achievement

The distributions of students' learning attitudes and English achievement showed that most of the students within the three universities and each of the university who got very

satisfactory English achievement had positive attitude toward learning English (see table 2).

Table 2. Students' Learning Attitudes and Their English Achievement

Attitude	EA	%	Universities
Positive Attitude	Very Satisfactory	58.25%	Within 3 Universities
Positive Attitude	Very Satisfactory	65.90%	Sriwijaya
Positive Attitude	Very Satisfactory	46.34%	Muham-madiyah
Positive Attitude	Very Satisfactory	66.66%	Taman Siswa

3.3 Correlation and Regression Analyses between Language Learning Attitudes and English Achievement

As the hypotheses suggest, students' language learning attitudes$_{(total)}$ and the factors were correlated with students' English achievement by using Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis. When the data within the three universities were analyzed, the writer did not find any significant correlations between learning attitudes and the students' English achievement. However, when the data of each university and the combination of state and private university were analyzed, some significant correlations were found. Positive significant correlation was found between students' English achievement and positive attitude in Muhammadiyah University with ($r =$ .404) and the probability value ($p =$.009) that was lower than the alpha level of 0.01. It means that H_0 was rejected, and H_1 was accepted. Furthermore, the correlation analysis that were carried out separately for state and private

university (Sriwijaya and Taman Siswa University) resulted in the significant correlation between language learning attitudes$_{(total)}$ and students' English achievement ($R=$-.299) with the probability value ($p =$.018) that was lower than the alpha level of 0.05.

Table 3. Pearson Product-Moment Correlation Coefficient among Variables Measured

	LLA	Positive Attitude	Negative Attitude	University
English Achievement	.191 .232 41	.404** .009 41	-.160 .319 41	Muham-madiyah
English Achievement	-.403 .097 18	-.206 .412 18	-.311 .209 18	Taman Siswa
English Achievement	-.299* .018 62	-.155 .230 62	-.248 .052 62	Sriwijaya-Taman Siswa

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Since statistically significant correlations were only shown by the variables of students' positive attitude and language learning attitudes$_{(total)}$ to the students' English achievement, only these variables were included in further analysis. The regression analysis was used in order to obtain a better understanding about the contribution of those variables on students' English achievement. The summary statistics for the regression analysis is presented below.

Table 4. Summary Statistics for Predicting Students' English Achievement from Students' Attitudes

University	Model	Dependent Variable	Predictor	R^2
Muham-madiyah	1 (N = 41)		Positive Attitude	.163
Sriwijaya and Taman	1 (N = 62)	English Achieve-ment	LLA $_{(total)}$	.089

From table 4, it could be seen that there was only a small proportion of variance in students' English achievement explained by positive attitude in Muhammadiyah University (R^2=16.3%). These results suggest that positive attitude was not successful to explain a lot of variation in students' English achievement. In line with the previous result, language learning attitudes$_{(total)}$ was also unsuccessful in explaining a lot of variation in students' English achievement (R^2= 8.9%) of Sriwijaya and Taman Siswa University.

3.4 Interpretation on Language Learning Attitudes and English Achievement

From the data distribution, it was found that most of the students within the three universities had positive attitude toward English and most of them had very satisfactory English achievement. Unfortunately, in this study, the results revealed that the significant correlations were not found among the students' language learning attitudes$_{(total)}$ and the factors of language learning attitudes with students' English achievement for the whole sample, for state and private university (Sriwijaya and Muhammadiyah University) and two private universities (Muhammadiyah and Taman Siswa University) as well.

In order to find out the reasons why, further research is actually needed. However, based on previous researchers, the writer would like to argue that actually the attitude of an individual depends heavily upon different stimuli (Inal, Evin, & Saracaloglu, 2009). According to Abidin, Pour-Mohammadi, and Alzwari (2012) in order to foster positive attitude towards language learning, factors contributing to the conducive learning environment must be present. It is agreed that the inner feelings and emotions of foreign language learners influence their perspectives and their attitudes towards the target language. In addition, there are also many other factors that might influence the students' attitude towards the target language, for instance, culture, teachers, environment, facilities, socioeconomic status, and community.

Different results revealed when the data from state and private university (Sriwijaya and Taman Siswa University) and each of the university which was Muhammadiyah University were analyzed. A correlation analysis of the data of Sriwijaya and Taman Siswa University showed that language learning attitudes$_{(total)}$ was significantly correlated with students' English achievement. However, there was only a very small proportion of variance in students' English achievement explained by language learning attitudes$_{(total)}$ (R^2=8.9%). This result suggested that language learning attitudes$_{(total)}$ failed to explain a lot of variation in students' English achievement in state and private university (Sriwijaya and Taman Siswa University).

A further correlational analysis of the data of Muhammadiyah University showed that there was a positive significant correlation between positive attitude and students' English achievement. This result suggested that the more the students had positive attitude in learning

English, the better their English achievement would be. As Bakar *et al.* (2010) explain, typically, positive attitude may be both the cause and the result of learning success. In addition, Youssef (2012) puts forward the idea that "a successful learner is one who possesses positive attitude towards the target language" (p. 369). The result of the analysis implied that in terms of their ways of behaving, the students of Muhammadiyah University were likely to have positive attitude towards English even though there was only a small proportion of variance in students' English achievement explained by positive attitude in Muhammadiyah University (R^2=16.3%). The results of this study for language learning attitudes imply that it is beneficial for the students to have positive attitude towards the target language so that they can get the best output of their learning. Finally, both negative and positive attitude have a strong impact on the success of language learning.

4. CONCLUSIONS

In this study, it was concluded that language learning attitudes$_{(total)}$ was significantly correlated with students' English achievement in Sriwijaya and Taman Siswa University with only a very small proportion of variance (R^2=8.9%). Besides, a positive significant correlation was also found between positive attitude and English achievement in Muhammadiyah University. It suggested that the more the students had positive attitude toward English, the better their English achievement would be. The proportion of variance in students' English achievement explained by positive attitude in Muhammadiyah University was 16.3%. The insignificant correlations among the students' language learning attitudes$_{(total)}$, the factors of language learning attitudes with students' English achievement for the whole sample, for Sriwijaya and Muhammadiyah University, two private universities (Muhammadiyah and Taman Siswa) and for each of Sriwijaya University and Taman Siswa University might be caused by many other factors, such as inner feelings, emotions, culture, teacher, community, etc.

Future studies later on need to investigate the role of other factors on students' English Achievement, for instance, gender, semester, socioeconomic status, learning strategies, learning styles and many others. Additionally, providing condusive learning situation may perform the students' positive attitude towards learning English.

However, this study held some limitations due to the weakness of the writer in conducting this study. Although the quantitative data revealed that significant correlations existed among language learning attitudes$_{(total)}$, positive attitude, and English achievement, and those variables contribute to the explained variation, the quantitative data could not explain those variables mentioned before were associated with students' English achievement. Therefore, the use of qualitative method can compensate for the insufficiency of the quantitative method. In this case, by carrying out the interviews with the students, the

information concerning how the students view language learning attitudes and their preference on learning attitudes may be gathered. Furthermore, in relation to the interviews with the students, the interviews with the lecturers can also be carried out in order to know such things as how the lecturers view learning attitudes and their relationships with the students' English achievement.

In addition, the low range of correlations found between language learning attitude and English achievement, might be related to using only the students' real GPA in four language skills as the measurement of the English achievement. Therefore, the writer suggests that it is considerably crucial to have more precise instrument to measure the students' English achievement instead of only using the students' real GPA in four language skills. Finally, this study can be used as an information to teachers/lectures, educators, parents, and the students themselves to pay more attention to learning attitude.

REFERENCES

Abidin, M. J. Z., Pour-Mohammadi, M., & Alzwari, H. 2012. *EFL students' attitudes towards learning English language: The case of Libyan secondary school students. Asian Social Science, 8*(2), 119-134.

Ali, M., Kos, J., Lietz, P., Nugroho, D., Furqon., Zainul, A., & Emilia, E. 2010. *Measuring student learning achievement in Madrasah.* Jakarta: AusAID and World Bank Indonesia.

Arikunto, S. 2002. *Prosedur penelitian: Suatu pendekatan praktek*. Jakarta: Rineka Cipta.

Bakar, K. A., Tarmizi, R. A., Mahyuddin, R., Elias, H., Luan, W.S., & Ayub, A. F. M. 2010. Relationships between university students' achievement motivation, attitude and academic performance in Malaysia. *ProcediaSocial and Behavioral Sciences,2*, 4906-4910.

Cacioppo, J. T., Petty, R. E., & Crites, S. L. (1994). Attitude change. *Encyclopedia of Human Behavior, 1,* 261-270.

Chalak, A., & Kassaian, Z. 2010. Motivation and attitudes of Iranian undergraduate EFL students towards learning English. *GEMA Online Jornal of Language Studies, 10*(2), 37-56.

Creswell, J. W. 2005. *Educational Research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research* (2nd ed.). New Jersey, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc.

Darabad, A. M. 2013. Attitude towards foreign language, corrective feedback, and oral accuracy. *International Journal of Linguistics, 5*(2), 116-134.

Erlina., & Zuraidah. 2010. English achievement on Non English students of Sriwijaya University in the academic year of 2007/2008. *Journal Holistics, 2*(4), 30-42.

Graham, S. 1997. *Effective language learning: Positive strategies for advanced level language learning.* London:Multilingual Matters Ltd.

Huang, C. P. 2010. Making English remedial instruction work for low-achieving students: An empirical study. 龍華科技大學學報第二十九期*, 6,* 167-183.

Inal, S., Evin, I., Saracaloglu,A. S. (2009, October).*The relationship between students' attitudes toward foreign language and foreign language achievement.* Paper presented at the International Conference Dokuz Eylul University Buca Faculty of Education, Izmir.

Khamari, J., & Guru, N. 2013. Relationship of attitude and achievement of secondary school students. *IOSR Journal of Research & Method in Education*, *1*(3), 50-54.

Madya, S., Sugeng, B., Maarif, S., Supriyanti, N., Purbani, W., Basikin., & Istiqomah, S. *2004. Developing a model of teaching English to primary school students. TEFLIN Journal, 15(2).*

Ming, T. S., Ling, T. S., & Jaafar, N. M. 2011. Attitudes and motivation of Malaysian secondary students towards learning English as a second language: A case study. *The Southeast Asian Journal of English Language Studies, 17*(1), 40-54.

Syatriana, E., Husain, D., Haryanto., & Jabu, B. 2013. A model of creating instructional materials based on the school curriculum for Indonesian secondary schools. *Journal of Education and Practice, 4*(20), 10-18.

Youssef, A. M. S. 2012. Role of motivation and attitude in introduction and learning of English as a foreign language in Libyan high schools. *International Journal of Linguistics, 4*(2), 366-375.