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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

A Contrastive Analysis Between English and Indonesian Assimilations <i>Masagus Sulaiman</i>	1
Improving Students' Writing Elements and Achievement by Using Picture Series <i>Kuntum Trilestari</i>	11
Teaching Vocabulary through Context Clues Strategy <i>Nurul Fitriyah Almunawaroh</i>	27
Language Learning Strategies Used by Sixth Semester Students of English Education Study Program <i>Hermansyah</i>	34
English in Malaysia <i>Dwi Ratnasari</i>	47
The Effectiveness of Using Cooperative Script in Teaching Reading Comprehension <i>Kurnia Saputri</i>	55
The Relationships Between Learning Attitudes and English Achievement of English Department Students <i>Fitria Aprilia</i>	62
About the Authors	70
Author Index	71
Title Index	72



## THE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN LEARNING ATTITUDES AND ENGLISH ACHIEVEMENT OF ENGLISH DEPARTMENT STUDENTS

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**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

### 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 Sanskrit 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:

- a) Behavioral aspect of attitude which deals with the way one behaves and reacts in particular situations.
- b) 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.
- c) Emotional aspect of attitude that can help the learners to express whether

they like or dislike the objects or surrounding situations.

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.

## METHOD

### 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

apple-converted-space;numbers of the sample were 44, 41, and 18 respectively. So, the total number of the sample was 103.

**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.

**Data Analysis**

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.

**RESULTS**

**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%	Muhammadiyah
EA	20	48.5%	
Positive Attitude	18	100%	Taman Siswa
EA	12	66.8%	

**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%	Muhammadiyah
Positive Attitude	Very Satisfactory	66.66%	Taman Siswa

### 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**

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

\*\* . 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**

Uni- versity	Model	Dependent Variable	Predictor	R <sup>2</sup>
Muhammadiyah	1 (N = 41)	English Achievement	Positive Attitude	.163
Sriwijaya and Taman Siswa	1 (N = 62)	English Achievement	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.

**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.

## CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

### 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.

### Suggestions

Based on the results of this study, the writer argues that beside language learning attitudes(total) and the factors of language learning attitude (positive and negative), there are still many unexplained factors that may contribute to the students' English Achievement. Therefore, future studies later on need to investigate the role of other factors on students' English Achievement, for instance, the students' semester, socioeconomic status, learning styles, learning strategies, and many others. Additionally, providing conducive 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 between language learning attitudes(total), positive attitude and English achievement, and those variables contributed to the explained variation, the quantitative data could not explain why those variables mentioned before were associated with students' English achievement. Therefore, the use of qualitative method can complement 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 or parents can also be carried out in order to know such things as how the lecturers or parents view learning attitudes and their relationships with the students' English achievement or their children's 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' 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' GPA. Finally, this study can be used as an information to teachers/lectures, educators, parents, and the students themselves to pay more attention to language learning attitudes.

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The **authors' names** (PI or primary author first) and institutional affiliation are 1 space from and centered below the title. When more then two authors, the names are separated by commas except for the last which is separated from the previous name by the word "and". The name of study program and faculty (Affiliation) is written below the author's names. No space between author's name and affiliation with size of 12. Authors' *emails* are written below the affiliation with size of 12.

**3. Abstract**

An **abstract** summarizes, in one paragraph (usually), the major aspects of the entire paper in the following prescribed sequence: In abstract, use descriptive words that you would associate strongly with the content of your paper: the brief introduction, purpose of the study, design and methods used, the sample and population used, the treatment, and a brief summary of the interpretations and conclusions. The length of the abstract should be *150 – 200 words* maximum using *Times New Roman font; 12 size*. Added some **Keywords** below the abstract to show the important points or special words discussed in the paper.

**4. INTRODUCTION**

This part explains the background, problems, purposes, and significance of the study. The introduction section may not need the subheading.

**5. LITERATURE REVIEW**

This section contains of all the theory, information and supporting data from the experts used in the study as the foundation of the research.

**6. METHODS**

In methods, it explains:

- Type and design of research
- Population, sample, and technique of taking the sample
- Research variable is formed operationally
- Research instrument is followed by validation and reliability
- Technique of data collection
- Technique of analyzing the data

**7. RESULTS**

Results of the study and discussions contain all the findings in answering the problem of the study.

**8. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION**

Conclusion and suggestion are written in brief and answering the problem(s) of the study.

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**10. APPENDICES**

For additional information, author may include the appendices in the last part of their paper such as questionnaire, text of the test, instrument, or media used in the research.

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