

Research Article

STUDENT ATTITUDE TOWARDS ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNING IN AN URBAN SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL IN BATU: A SURVEY

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Abstract.

This study aimed to investigate urban students' attitudes toward English learning. This study uses a quantitative method by giving an online questionnaire using Likert scales. The questionnaire focused on two aspects of attitude: BALLI by Hortwitz (1988) and Attitude towards English Language Learning by Sudirman and Huzairin (2017). 42 students from Islamic Senior High School in Batu, East Java, Indonesia were the participants of this study. The results of this study found that the students generally had a positive attitude toward English language learning. However, a unique pattern shows a duality where the students are anxious to speak English, but they also consider making mistakes as a part of learning. The students also felt that English is important to foster their interest in the language and encourage them to learn more.

Keywords: *Attitudes, Urban school, English language Learning*

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1. INTRODUCTION

In learning foreign language, factors that might influence students' learning process are attitudes, motivation, and aptitudes. It is also mentioned that age, intelligence, anxiety, personality and even age also play an important role. (Gardner, 1960; Lehmann & Jones, 1987, Hashwani, 2008; Abidin, Pour-Mohhamadi, & Alzwari, 2012). It is mentioned that one of the most crucial factors that give significant influence in language learning is students' attitudes. According to Wigati (2019), attitude is someone's intelligence that is related to acceptance and refusal that might influence their behavior. She added that someone's attitude is relying upon their way of perceiving belief, feeling, and behavioral tendency to feel and comprehend towards something. Moreover, attitude builds the learner's perception towards the teaching and learning in the class. From the definition, we can see that attitude in language learning is indeed important.

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According to Youssef (2012), attitudes in language learning might be positive or negative. When the learners have enthusiasm in language learning, it can be indicated as a positive attitude. On the contrary, when the learners tend to be less enthusiastic, lazy, and not showing any interest in language learning, it is indicated as a negative attitude (Chalak & Kassaian, 2010). This statement is supported by Zulfikar, Dahliana, & Sari (2019) that defined the concept of positive learning attitude as a situation when the learners are happy towards the language learning and the learners would actively engage in the process of teaching and learning. While the concept of negative attitude is a situation when the learners may feel anxious in learning, would find difficulties in enjoying the class, and easily get bored in the learning process. In conclusion, it is indicated as a positive attitude when the learners show more interest in language learning. The learners tend to be happy, enjoy, and active in the learning process. In contrast, it is indicated as a negative attitude when the learner shows less interest and tends to be passive in the class. They do not have the desire to learn the language and dislike it.

The classification of urban and rural areas in Indonesia has been regulated in the regulation of the head of statistic number 37 in 2010. It is mentioned that urban area is the status of a village-level administrative area which meets the classification criteria of urban area. The criteria of urban area is a certain requirement regarding the population density, percentage of agricultural household, and existence/access to urban facilities (education facilities, market and store, public health facilities, entertainment facilities, etc). On the other hand, if a village-level administrative area does not meet the classification criteria of urban area, it will be considered as rural area. Thus, the schools in both rural and urban areas also have their own classification.

Previous research concerning attitude towards English language learning was done by Setianengsih, Salam, and Arifin (2017). The study was intended to examine the rural students' attitude towards English language learning. In terms of affective, behavioral, and cognitive aspects, the rural students showed positive attitudes towards English language learning. Another study concerning attitude towards English learning was also done by Wigati (2019). She compared the attitude of both urban and rural junior high school students in learning English. It is found that positive and negative attitudes towards English language learning were shown by both urban and rural students. Positive attitudes made the students enjoy learning the English language. However, negative attitudes are indicated when the students often feel anxious in learning English. 62.5% of urban students and 50% of rural students showed positive attitudes in learning

English. Moreover, 75% of urban students showed negative attitudes towards learning English while in rural school there were 72%.

Based on the explanation and the empirical findings above, we are interested in conducting research focusing on the urban students' attitude towards English. Before choosing the school, we had already done a simple observation by asking some of the students. We concluded some reasons for choosing the school: 1) The school is located in an urban area; 2) Some of the students seem skeptical about learning English. Therefore, we formulate the research questions as follows:

1. How are urban school students' beliefs on the language learning inventory?
2. How are the attitudes of urban school students towards English language learning?

This study concerns analyzing the students' attitudes towards English language learning. It is expected to be beneficial for teachers in developing and finding a good way of teaching. As a result, teachers might design better teaching methods and strategies.

2. METHOD

This research was conducted in an urban school, Islamic Senior High School in Batu, East Java, Indonesia. There were 42 students who were involved as participants to answer the online questionnaire about their attitudes toward English language learning. The questionnaire is considered an appropriate instrument to examine students' attitudes in big populations based on the research topic. By adopting some parts of the questionnaire Beliefs About the Language Learning Inventory (BALLI) by Hortwitz (1988) which covered foreign language aptitude, the nature of language learning, learning, and communication strategies. It also combined attitudes toward native English speakers, integrative and instrumental orientation, interest in English, attitude toward English class, and attitude towards English teachers aspects by Sudirman and Huzairin (2017). These aspects are instrumented as 35 items on the Likert scale based on strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, and strongly agree. This study was conducted in the Indonesian context. Thus, the instrument was translated into Indonesian. This consideration was made for the practicality of the respondents and to get more accurate data. The instrument was spread to the students in a form of Google Forms. As mentioned above this instrument is based on the Likert scale of agreement, the data were analyzed based on the interval data. Then, concluded based on the most dominant respondents' responses.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

TABLE 1: The Beliefs about Language Learning Inventory (BALLI).

No	Aspects	Statements	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	Belief about Foreign Language Aptitude	It is easier for children (12 – 18 yrs.) than adults (18 -21 yrs.) to learn English.	4.8%	2.4%	31%	40.5%	21.4%
		Some people have a special ability for learning English.	2.4%	2.4%	19%	31%	45.2%
		I have an aptitude for learning English.	4.8%	16.7%	33.3%	38.1%	7.1%
		People who are good at mathematics or science are not good at learning English.	54.8%	23.8%	16.7%	4.8%	0%
		Women are better than men at learning English.	26.2%	28.6%	33.3%	7.1%	4.8%
2	Beliefs about the Nature of Language Learning	It is best to learn English in an English-speaking country.	19%	19%	21.4%	21.4%	19%
		The most important part of learning English is learning vocabulary.	0%	2.4%	11.9%	26.2%	59.5%
		The most important part of learning English is learning grammar	2.4%	4.8%	14.3%	35.7%	42.9%
		Learning English is different from learning other academic subjects.	9.5%	7.1%	28.6%	26.2%	28.6%
		The most important part of learning English is learning how to translate from my native language.	0%	2.4%	16.7%	35.7%	45.2%
3	Beliefs about Learning and Communication Strategies	It is important to repeat and practice a lot.	0%	0%	2.4%	14.3%	83.3%
		It is important to practice with a tape recorder, smartphone, or computer.	0%	0%	9.5%	38.1%	52.4%
		I feel timid speaking English with other people.	9.5%	2.4%	23.8%	40.5%	23.8%
		You shouldn't say anything in English until you can say it correctly.	47.6%	31%	14.3%	4.8%	2.4%
		It's okay to guess if you don't know a word in English.	0%	2.4%	23.7%	35.7%	38.1%

This section focuses on three aspects of the beliefs about language learning inventory (BALLI). Belief about foreign language aptitude is the first question. There were 45,2% students who strongly agreed with the statement “some people have a special ability

for learning English”. In another question asking about their aptitudes, 38,1% students agreed with the “I have an aptitude for learning English” statement. It means, the students realize and agree that there are aptitudes in learning language. This implies there is a talent that might help them acquire a language faster.

In beliefs about the nature of language learning's aspect, various responses were shown by the students towards a statement “it is best to learn English in an English speaking country”. 21.4% of students agreed and 19% strongly agreed, which means that they showed positive beliefs that learning English in an English speaking country is better. It is compared to 19% disagreed and 19% strongly disagreed and the other is neutral. This finding implies that some students believe that nature or environment are beneficial aspects in learning languages. The other finding also shows that the respondent of this study mostly agreed that the most important part of learning English is learning vocabulary, learning grammar, and learning how to translate from their native language. The reports show that 59.5% students strongly agreed towards the importance of learning vocabulary and 42.9% students strongly agreed that learning grammar is also important. Furthermore, 45.2% students also strongly agree with the statement that the most important part of learning English is how to translate from their native language to English. Towards a statement “learning English is different than learning other academic subjects”, 28.6% students strongly agreed. Such finding implies that students here understood the importance of vocabulary in language learning which may implicate them to prioritize this aspect. In addition, the students also considered that grammar has an important and crucial role in language. This could happen due to the fact that in learning language there was a structure and each language may have different sentence constructions. The other item also supports this idea by the students' belief on the importance of translating from their native language to English which showed their attention toward language structure since Indonesian and English do not share the same grammatical structure.

The other aspect is beliefs about learning and communication strategies. 83.3% students strongly agreed that repeating and practicing a lot is very important. It means that conventional learning strategies are still supported and accepted by the students. Even though considered as conventional or traditional this learning strategy is really significant since acquiring language repetition or habituation was really effective so the student understands that in the case of language, the value of repetition plays a critical role in learning language. Furthermore, 52.4% students of this study also strongly agreed with the statement “it is important to practice with a tape recorder, Smartphone or computer”. This finding implicates the other part of language learning such as listening

or speaking and the integration of technology to it. The students showed a positive attitude towards this aspect. It implies that the respondents here understood that in learning language either listening or speaking is important and it may foster them to put more attention to it.

Many students (23.8% strongly agree and 40.5% agree) felt shy or timid to speak in English with other people. However, many students (47.6%) disagreed with the statement “you shouldn’t say anything in English until you can say it correctly”. This finding showed there was a disconnect pattern since they felt anxious to speak English as they responded in a shy or timid manner. Conversely, they also show negative attitudes towards “you shouldn’t produce a language if they cannot say it correctly” which means that they felt fine to make mistakes. Although there was a duality that they seem anxious to speak English, they also seem to consider it is fine to try or learn by mistakes. The findings also showed that the students (38.1% strongly agreed and 35.7% agreed) towards a statement “it is okay to guess if you don’t know a word in English”. This tendency might cause several problems such as misunderstanding or misinterpretation. In relation with the previous finding the student generally felt more comfortable perceiving language as their own and somewhat felt fine to make mistakes even though they were timid or shy.

Furthermore, the result of the question on how the students’ attitudes towards English will be known from this last section. This section covered some aspects of students’ attitudes such as attitudes towards native speakers. From the data, we can conclude that the students mostly showed positive attitudes towards native English speakers. This attitude might encourage students to learn English. This conclusion was made due to the fact that 47% of the students have a desire to meet the native English speakers (strongly agreed). In addition, related to their vision of whether English culture plays an important role in modernization, the students 57.1% strongly agreed.

Another aspect that is covered by this section is integrative and instrumental orientation. The data showed that the students have high orientations in English Learning. According to these data results, both teachers and students have to find effective ways in teaching and learning English. According to these data results, effective ways in teaching and learning English have to be found by both teachers and students. The students might change their ways of studying to find the best way in learning the English language. Moreover, the teacher might change the teaching method or strategies in teaching the students. Related to job opportunities, the students mostly believed that they would have a better future if they were fluent in English. This conclusion was made

TABLE 2: Attitudes toward English Learning.

No	Aspects	Statements	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	Attitude towards native English speakers	I always want to meet native English speakers	2.4%	14.3%	16.7%	19%	47%
		English culture has an important role in modernization.	0%	2.4%	16.7%	23.8%	57.1%
		Native English speakers are social, warm, and creative people.	2.4%	0%	28.6%	40.5%	28.6%
2	Integrative and Instrumental Orientation	Learning English is important to me because it can make it easier for me to speak English with other people.	0%	0%	2.4%	21.4%	76.2%
		Learning English is important to me so I can get a better school/job.	0%	0%	9.5%	28.6%	61.9%
		Learning English is important to me because I hope to visit an English-speaking country one day.	0%	4.8%	2.4%	19%	73.8%
		Learning English is important to me because people will appreciate me more if I have good English skills.	7.1%	9.5%	26.2%	19%	38.1%
3	Interest in English	I wish I could read English newspapers or magazines.	4.8%	0%	7.1%	16.7%	71.4%
		I wish I could speak fluent English.	0%	0%	2.4%	2.4%	95.2%
		Learning English is just a waste of time.	83.3%	14.3%	2.4%	0%	0%
		When I finish school, I won't be studying English anymore.	81%	16.7%	0%	0%	2.4%
		Learning English is an enjoyable experience.	0%	0%	11.9%	35.7%	52.4%
4	Attitude towards English Class	I feel very happy when I am in English class.	0%	4.8%	33.3%	23.8%	38.1%
		I believe that I have made the right choice by choosing the English class I am currently taking.	2.4%	2.4%	21.4%	33.3%	40.5%
		I think this class will make a lot of progress in my English.	0%	7.1%	11.9%	21.4%	59.5%
		I always prepare myself as well as possible before taking an English class.	0%	0%	42.9%	28.6%	28.6%
5	Attitude towards English Teacher	The English teacher always encourages me to practice my English.	0%	2.4%	21.4%	38.1%	38.1%
		I get annoyed when the teacher corrects my English mistakes.	50%	31%	11.9%	2.4%	4.8%
		The English teacher is a very friendly and nice person.	0%	0%	23.8%	23.8%	52.4%
		Learning English gives me the feeling that I am a successful person.	0%	4.8%	11.9%	40.5%	42.9%

because 61.9% of students agreed with the statement “If I learn English very well, I will have better opportunities for a good job”.

Students’ interest in English is also covered in this section. From the data in the table above, we can conclude that the students performed high interest in English. 95.2% of the students wish that they could speak English fluently. This high interest in English might give them motivation to learn English.

Students’ attitudes towards English class and English teachers are also measured. Positive attitudes were shown by most of the students. From the table, we can see that 40.5% of the students strongly agreed that they have made the right decision to take English class. It means that they have a positive attitude towards the English classes. Moreover, another evidence of their positive attitude towards the English class is that 59.5% of the students strongly agreed that the class will make a lot of progress in their English. However, 42.9% of the students chose neutral when they were asked if they prepared themselves well before attending the English Class. It means that the students could not find the urgency of doing that behavior. They might prepare themselves before attending the class but perhaps not as well as it was expected. In addition, the statement that the English teacher is very friendly and nice was strongly agreed by 52.4% of the students. It is undeniable that if the students love or show positive attitudes towards the teacher, it will make them love the lesson and easier in accepting it. It could happen because the teacher always encourages them to practice English (38.1% of the students strongly agree). It is also portrayed that 50% of them strongly disagreed if they will be annoyed if the teacher corrects their English mistakes. It means that they have a big intention to learn and use English properly.

4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This study specifically focused on two related aspects of attitudes such as Beliefs about Language Learning Inventory (BALLI) by Hortwitz (1988) and the Attitude toward English Learning by Sudirman and Huzairin (2017). This topic was brought up as a survey to know the urban senior high school students’ attitudes towards English language learning. This research was done in senior high school in Batu. As the previous study in a similar context (Indonesia) showed that urban students considered English an interesting subject even though they also felt anxious (Wigati, 2019). This research also shares a similar pattern where the students in this research show a unique attitude since they feel shy or timid or somewhat anxious to produce it but they also thought that making mistakes was a part of learning. In addition, this study also uncovered that a positive

attitude mostly showed by the students towards interest in learning English such as the ability to read English sources, they also wish to be fluent in English then show a really negative attitude toward the idea that they will not continue to study English after school and learning English is wasting time. They also felt English class was enjoyable. This finding implies that the students were interested by showing a positive attitude towards interest in English.

This study is expected to be beneficial for teachers in designing better teaching methods and strategies so that they can develop and find a good way of teaching English. This study was done in one urban school. For future researchers, we suggest that it will be better to survey more than one school. In addition, this study is limited on finding the students' attitudes in learning language. The researcher also suggests future researchers would explore another aspect that influences students in learning language such as motivations, aptitude, instruction, and feedback.

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