



## Original Article

# Factors Influencing Students' Attitude and Motivation About Studying English as a Foreign Language

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## Abstract:

This study aims to analyze the factors that influence students' attitudes and motivation in learning English as a Foreign Language. These factors include various elements that influence students' desire and interest in learning English, such as internal and external motivation, perception of the usefulness of English, and previous language learning experience. The method to be used is quantitative research using descriptive design. The population is all students of the English Department at Universitas Muhammadiyah Kalimantan Timur (UMKT). The population of this study was about 196 students, and the researcher randomly selected a sample of 132 students from the total population for this study. Based on the results of the study, 69.7% of students have the motivation to learn English because they want to have a profession related to the language later. This shows that most students have a strong motivation to learn English because they see a direct relevance between English language skills and future career opportunities.

**Keywords:** Motivation, Attitude, Foreign language, English learning

## Introduction

Language is a type of verbal communication tool for socialization among people worldwide. Through language, one person and another can interact and build identities. As Pratiwi (2015) claimed language is a symbolic tool that social groupings utilize to facilitate effective communication and promote mutual collaboration. Language and education will always be significant, especially for a student. Learning a foreign language may be a fulfilling but demanding pursuit for example English for a foreign language has many reasons either for academic needs or personal development. Even, many studies reported that learning a foreign language to global communication requirement.



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All these arguments emphasize how crucial it is for students to be proficient in English to succeed in their education and an increasingly globalized society. English is the most widely spoken, read, and comprehended language by most of the global population. There is widespread recognition that many global academic journals publish only in English (Getie, 2020).

In today's era of rapid globalization, proficiency in foreign languages has become crucial for effective communication, particularly for students seeking to enhance their skills. As regards the development of technology, English as a foreign language has become a second and international language. In Indonesia, English has become a compulsory subject in the national curriculum. English is a subject taught to students from the elementary to the tertiary level (Maduwu, 2016). It has also been proved that Indonesia has become 74 out of 100 nations ranking on the English proficiency index based on EF 2022 Education First (Hernanda et al., 2022). According to those results, many people, especially in Indonesia, have expertise in English. However, in reality, there are some challenges in learning this foreign language such as limited vocabulary, grammar, different cultures, limited practice, psychological barriers likewise anxiety, and lack of motivation. Further, they claimed that foreign languages, mainly English, play a significant role in education. It is known that three sorts of languages are widely used in Indonesia: Indonesian, regional, and foreign. Among the three varieties of language mentioned, one of them, mainly English, is frequently challenged by Indonesian individuals. Despite being a foreign language in Indonesia, English is significant in daily written and spoken communication.

Previous research found that the participants stated that studying English helped them advance (Astriningsih & Mbato, 2019). Another claimed that learning a foreign language needs many strategies such as gamification which proved it helped the students in motivating themselves to learn English (Huseinović, 2024). In other situations, on both national and international scales, English usage has steadily increased annually since it became a popular means of communication (Seidlhofer, 2005). The widespread usage of English across numerous sectors has even been linked to professional achievements and financial prospects (Romrome & Mbato, 2023). From those statements, it can be concluded that English has been widely applied and functioned globally in every single matter of human need. Recognizing shifts in students' motivation for learning often prompts the creation of strategic planning and learning activities.

However, learning English is not effortless for everybody. Meanwhile, for the teachers, there are challenges and barriers in teaching English early in Indonesia, such as navigating a new sound, learning new vocabulary, and constructing sentences with foreign words, which can be challenging due to the differences between the Indonesian and English language systems (Sundari, 2018). Apart from many challenges that become obstacles for students to learn English, the role of motivation is also very important to see and investigate because learning without motivation will not provide maximum results, especially in learning English as a foreign language. Further, several students think that having a conversation in English becomes controversial, related to their positive and negative attitudes toward it. Unfortunately, the motivation to learn English for some students in Indonesia was categorized as low (Rahardjo & Pertiwi, 2020). However, in investigating motivation, it is found that needs are aspects that cannot be generalized. Another result related to motivation in learning English came from Dehghanzadeh et al., (2021) revealed that by gamification technique, students have a positive effect and are highly motivated to learn English. The students are more motivated and engaged and feel

so much fun interacting and studying English using this technique.

Another interesting problem is the student's attitude toward learning English. It is known that a positive attitude is considered one of the crucial factors in learning a language. Students' attitudes can vary. From good to negative, they are influenced by several circumstances (Utami & Husein, 2021). However, Students' approach to studying English as a foreign language highlights the need to acquire the language for various goals beyond just passing the subject.

A positive mindset in students leads to increased motivation, prompting them to exert more effort in attaining the objective of language acquisition. These attitudes encompass cognitive and emotive components. These attitudes are connected to mental processes and emotional experiences. Multiple factors impact them, including parental influence, peer interactions, and engagement in activities with individuals from diverse socioeconomic and cultural backgrounds. In general, attitudes are crucial, it is in shaping an individual's perception of themselves, others, and the surrounding culture (Getie, 2020). It means that people interpret their experiences and interactions through their attitudes.

Recently, attitudes have garnered considerable attention from research focusing on first and second languages. This research has shown that students' attitudes are crucial for learning and should be a fundamental teaching component for acquiring a second or foreign language (Utami & Husein, 2021). Several variables contribute to the significance of researching students' attitudes toward language acquisition. Initially, it is often acknowledged that attitudes toward learning substantially impact behavior, such as choosing and reading books and participating in conversations in a foreign language. There are two types of attitudes: favorable and unfavorable. A positive attitude towards language acquisition can enhance an individual's motivation, while a negative outlook can diminish desire. The learner's disposition towards language learning might impact the degree of success in language acquisition. It is important to note that attitudes comprise behavioral, cognitive, and emotional categories (Santoso et al., 2014). The affective aspect of attitude pertains to the learner's reaction to specific situations. The cognitive component of attitude involves the learner's perception of language, such as students considering English language acquisition as significant, resulting in a favorable attitude towards learning English.

Previous studies about attitudes toward learning English as a foreign language in senior high school claimed that senior high students express more negative than positive attitudes toward language learning (Delic, 2020). Further, he stated that the factors contributing to their negative attitudes such as school policy, learning environment, and teaching methods. Therefore, there were no statistically significant differences between genders regarding their positive and negative attitude toward learning English. Empirical evidence has demonstrated an association between attitudes and success or achievement. The research indicates that attitudes impact achievement rather than success influencing attitudes. Attitude substantially impacts behavior, emotion, and, thus, the learning process. Language acquisition is impacted by the environment in which students grow up. Mindsets of pessimism and optimism notably impact the success of language acquisition (Robertson & Nunn, 2012).

Motivation is an essential factor in achieving success in the learning process. Professionals give several definitions of motivation. According to (Hayikaleng et al., 2016), motivation is an important factor in students' performance in learning English. When students are motivated, they are more eager and persistent in learning. However, if

motivation is low, they can have difficulty understanding the lesson. (Alizadeh, 2016) motivation is a force that directs behavior and influences a person's desire to repeat or avoid specific actions.

Define motivation as the tendency or aspiration to participate in an activity (Purmama et al., 2019) Motivation is a complex notion that is difficult to explain, so many experts have attempted to create a clear description. Sundari et al., (2024). Revealed that nowadays students need more learning motivation to learn skills in foreign languages such as reading comprehension skills. Their achievement in learning skills is influenced by their motivation in learning as the majority of students claimed that English is not an easy lesson specifically as a compulsory subject in school moreover it is not their second language. They follow English classes just because of the curriculum rather than their willingness.

Experts have outlined essential factors contributing to learner motivation, including the desire for pleasure and knowledge. There is a need to analyze and absorb the results of exploration, manipulation, action, and stimulation to resolve conflicts, design solutions to problems, and build a coherent knowledge framework. There is a need for ego reinforcement, self-recognition, and validation from others (Rahardjo & Pertiwi, 2020). Motivation is a crucial factor in the process of acquiring language. Furthermore, students with greater motivation levels will outperform classmates with lower motivation levels.

Two primary types of motivation persist: internal and external. Internal motivation is the innate drive that prompts an individual to participate in a specific activity. Internal motivation stems from the learner's desires and determination to accomplish their objectives (Getie, 2020). Students enjoy learning English due to their inherent motivation to achieve their goals. External motivation is driven by external benefits, like awards or praise, that inspire an individual to pursue external goals. To pursue their goals, students are driven by extrinsic motivation, such as the aspiration for a better professional future. Further, experts concluded that intrinsic or extrinsic motivation is more important in influencing professional decisions rather than motivation in terms of career opportunities. Emphasizing motivation and attitudes in language learning and instruction is crucial since strong motivation and favorable attitudes towards a second language can significantly enhance second language acquisition.

Students with a favorable attitude towards language acquisition are more prone to excel as proficient language learners. They stress that a positive mindset enables students to approach language acquisition effectively, substantiating this claim with evidence (Getie, 2020). Motivation and attitude as a single entity (Imsa-Ard, 2020). About learning language, one of the many aspects that influence language learning, attitude is the primary one. However, previous research showed that there was a correlation between students' attitudes and learning achievement (Lestari & Asari, 2023). It means that attitudes can't be considered as the only consideration of learning achievement. However, attitudes have a significant impact on motivation, engagement, self-assurance, and general performance during the learning process.

Factors influencing attitudes toward second or foreign language learning include personality, educational experience, social environment, and age and gender. Age and gender also affect how individuals understand and learn a new language (Wang et al., 2022) By understanding these factors, learning strategies can be developed to better suit the needs of individuals in improving their language skills. Contextual factors, such as psychological, social, and educational conditions, also play an important role in language learning. A positive attitude reduces affective barriers and increases student motivation

(Sabboor Hussain et al., 2020) The classroom atmosphere created by the teacher also plays a role in creating a supportive learning environment. In addition, students' attitudes, including motivation and self-confidence, also affect their ability to learn a new language. A positive and motivated attitude can increase students' engagement in language learning. Self-confidence, self-efficacy, risk-taking, and anxiety also play an essential role in language learning. High confidence levels encourage students to accept information and reduce barriers to learning. Low risk-taking and anxiety also increase students' motivation and learning attitude in the language learning process (Adara, 2019).

Educational conditions, including the learning atmosphere at school, can also affect students' attitudes and motivation in mastering the target language. Likewise, learning situations, including teaching approaches and classroom dynamics, shape students' attitudes and motivation toward language learning (Khan & Takkac, 2021) The teacher's role in creating a positive and supportive learning environment shapes students' attitudes toward language learning. Social contexts, such as interactions with family, peers, and the community, also influence language learning. A student's family and home environment influence speech patterns and language comprehension. Interaction with peers also plays a vital role in language learning, while the community or native speakers of the target language also exert a significant influence. Based on previous findings, it can be concluded that motivation in learning English has to be increased so the students don't feel that it is only for the mandatory lesson but it needs more intrinsic motivation to achieve maximum results in learning. However, in higher levels contexts. such as pre-service English are not motivated to pursue a career Therefore, based on the explanation above, this research is willing to identify the factors influencing students' attitudes and motivations to learn English. Attitude and motivation are complex social, cultural, and psychological factors that impact how pupils engage with different life experiences, such as acquiring a second language. Experienced educators understand that students with a good attitude will advance more quickly in acquiring a second language.

## Methods

This research was a descriptive quantitative research design. The instrument was a questionnaire to gather numerical data on students' motivation and attitudes towards learning English. It includes a Likert scale to rate their agreement with statements alongside demographic questions. The data collection process began with developing a questionnaire to collect quantitative data on students' motivation and attitudes toward learning English. This questionnaire covered various aspects, such as motivational factors, and attitudes. The study population consisted of students of the English Education Department of UMKT. The total population was 196 students and the sampling was simple random. The calculation of the sample after processing by using the Slovin formula calculation which is available online with a 5% margin of error means that the confidence level that is used was 95%. This technique was applied to determine the factors that influence learning English in terms of their attitudes and their motivation. Therefore. 132 students have been randomly selected as respondents. The analysis results were presented using tables, graphs, and diagrams to facilitate clear and concise communication. Conclusions from the analysis provided an in-depth understanding of patterns, trends, and variations in students' responses to English language learning, as well as the implications of the findings. The table below is the criteria for evaluating student's motivation and Attitudes Toward Learning.

Table 1. Criteria and Interval of Motivation

| No. | Criteria  | Intervals  |
|-----|-----------|------------|
| 1   | Very high | 85% - 100% |
| 2   | High      | 69% - 84%  |
| 3   | Low       | 53% - 68%  |
| 4   | Very Low  | 36% - 52%  |

## Results

### Finding and Discussion

The data obtained from the research activities, which involved 132 students filling out questionnaires, yielded the following results according to descriptive analysis:

Table 2. Student Motivation in Learning English as a Foreign Language

|   | Indicator                                                                                                           | Results | Category |
|---|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|----------|
| 1 | I like English                                                                                                      | 56,1%   | Low      |
| 2 | Studying English is necessary to me because it will enable me to know new people from different parts of the world. | 56,1%   | Low      |
| 3 | Studying English is significant to me because I would like to learn as many foreign languages as possible           | 57,6%   | Low      |
| 4 | Studying English is notable to me because an educated person is supposed to be able to speak English                | 70,5%   | High     |
| 5 | Studying English is important to me so that I can be a more knowledgeable person.                                   | 46,2%   | Low      |
| 6 | Studying English is noteworthy to me so that I can be a more knowledgeable person                                   | 59,1%   | Low      |
| 7 | Studying English is obligatory for me because I may need it later (for my job, and studies).                        | 47%     | Low      |
| 8 | Studying English is substantial to me so that I can understand English-speaking films, videos, TV, or radio.        | 55,3%   | Low      |

|      |                                                                                                                                |       |      |
|------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|------|
| 9    | Studying English is important to me so that I can read English texts on social media, English books, newspapers, or magazines. | 56,8% | Low  |
| 10   | Studying English is important to me because I would like to spend some time abroad.                                            | 69,7% | High |
| Mean |                                                                                                                                | 57,4% | Low  |

Based on the table 2. Above there are 10 statements related to the motivation in learning English. According to the results of the questionnaire, around 56,1% of students stated that they liked English meanwhile it was considered a low category in other words half of the students don't like English. It was indicated by Hartono et al., (2023) was true that some students don't have proficiency in English just because are not driven to pursue it. However, more than half of students (56,1%) realized that learning English is important for them. It was the slight result of the statement no. 3 that shows around 57% of students have significant from learning English such as from academic opportunities, career, global communication, personal and social life skills, as well as cognitive benefits. Statement no. 4 which related to the personal mindset that an educated person should be able to speak English got 70,5% attention from the representative respondents. It shows a high-level category compared to the previous statements. The indication of interest in learning English is determined by the fact that most students consider English language abilities to be a crucial characteristic of an educated individual. This viewpoint is held by 70.5% of students, indicating a high level of motivation. This demonstrates that most students have a strong inclination to acquire proficiency in the English language. This perspective is seen in the assumption that English serves not just as a medium of communication, but also as a representation of universally acknowledged scholastic prestige.

Studying English helped to become a more knowledgeable person. This indicates that English made someone more knowledgeable. However, this only reached around 46% which means that more than half of the respondents didn't feel the same. It was similar to statements no. 6 (59%) and 7 (47%) claimed that learning English is obligatory for their future jobs or the next study and that learning English made them look so important. Their motivation in studying English was just because of global communication. It was very important because if they mastered English, they could easily comprehend the text in English which is what happens in social media and any other platform both offline and online. Students' strong motivation is evident in their recognition of the significance of English as a universal means of communication, which may provide several prospects. At a glance, from the motivation side, the result was not high. It tended to be low level, it was because several reasons which indirectly mentioned and answered from the statement given. However, several previous research stated that the motivation to study English in school and university tended to be different as it was influenced by the compulsory subject in school contexts and university contexts.

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Learning English as a foreign language among students shows a variety of attitudes that affect the effectiveness of the learning process. Students' positive attitudes toward English are also related to students' motivation to learn. When students are motivated, they are more eager and persistent in learning. However, if the motivation is low, they will have difficulty understanding the lesson. other than that, self-factors also affect learning motivation. This learning motivation can also come from the students themselves. The desire within will make students learn more actively. Promoting learning motivation from students themselves is the most effective part of learning (Susilo et al., 2020). The student's willingness is very influential on the student's willingness to learn (Yulianingsih et al., 2020). Moreover, another researcher viewed that students in Indonesia may not be as proficient in the language as they should be since they are not driven to pursue a vocation by their feeling of self-efficacy ((Hartono et al., 2023). As a comparison, students in the Middle East prefer to see the motivation to learn English based on gender perception (Daif-Allah et al., 2020). However, generally university students have different motivations rather than students in school in terms of motivation. Students in university were highly motivated to learn English compared to senior high school whereby they need more strategies and efforts to be more motivated in learning. It was proved by the previous study which shows that students (Sundari et al., 2024).

The above explanation are finding and discussion for the motivation statement. Further, the table below explains the attitude statement questionnaire.

Table 3. Students' attitudes Learning English as a foreign language

|   | Indicator                                                              | Results | Category |
|---|------------------------------------------------------------------------|---------|----------|
| 1 | I think English is the most interesting subject that we have on campus | 78,8%   | High     |
| 2 | I like to learn English because I want to live abroad.                 | 76,5%   | High     |
| 3 | I'm a competent English user                                           | 90,2%   | High     |
| 4 | I like to learn English because I want to have a good profession in it | 69,7%   | High     |

|      |                                                                        |       |      |
|------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------|------|
| 5    | I like to learn English because it is one way to get a good job.       | 72%   | High |
| 6    | I like to learn English because I want to pass the Examination.        | 74%   | High |
| 7    | I believe that I can do the English examination very well.             | 78%   | High |
| 8    | I am free of any frustration whenever I speak English in the classroom | 88,6% | High |
| 9    | I do not like to learn English because it is not my favorite subject   | 99,2% | High |
| 10   | I wish that no subjects on campus were taught in English               | 97%   | High |
| Mean |                                                                        | 82,4% | High |

Table 3 above shows the result of the questionnaire in terms of attitudes toward learning English. The individuals expressing a lack of interest in studying English due to it not being a preferred subject achieved a score of 99.2%, placing them in the highest group. The data shown in this figure indicates that most students within the study population expressed a lack of preference for the topic of English. This indicates a significant issue in students' desire to acquire proficiency in the English language, which might have a detrimental impact on the efficiency of the learning experience. This indicator shows that most students (69.7%) consider it important to learn English because they want to spend time abroad. This view reflects aspirations for international experiences that involve using English as a means of communication abroad. This motivation could stem from a desire to learn about a new culture, improve English language skills directly in a native language setting, or pursue educational or career opportunities abroad that require English language proficiency.

The indicator with the statement learning English is very important for students because students who want to spend time abroad received a percentage of 69.7% in the high category. Indicators in learning English from this perspective are likewise language ability, academic achievement, cognitive abilities, resource management, communication, cultural competency, and motivation are overall indications of utilizing English for learning. Meanwhile according to Categorization (2021) indicator of learning English by taking IELTS, TOEFL, and other English tests. There are so numerous other indicators that use English as their indicator for their achievement. The student's proficiency in writing, knowledge, and learning attitudes were all categorized as being in the top group along with their attitudes Astuti et al., (2018).

This table shows that most students realize the importance of English as the main means of communication in many countries. This motivation is driven by the desire to

explore global opportunities, whether in the context of education, career, or cultural experiences. The indicator with the statement Learning English is very important for students so that students can broaden their horizons gets a percentage of 59.1% in the low category. this shows that more than half of the students realize that mastery of English can help them gain access to wider and more diverse information. With English proficiency, students can read literature, scientific journals, and news from around the world, which is often not available in their native language. This gives them a deeper understanding of global topics and issues and increases their knowledge in various fields. From the results above, the average percentage is 57.4% which is included in the low learning attitude category.

### Conclusion

Based on the data and discussion of the factors that influence students' attitudes and motivation in learning English as a foreign language. It can be concluded that there are indicators that fall into the low category with a value of 57.4%. The existence of motivation for career and academic goals is high, but intrinsic interest in the subject itself is still very low. This indicates the need for more interesting and relevant teaching strategies to increase students' interest, as well as to minimize the negative impact of less positive attitudes towards learning English. Although students' motivation to learn English is very high, challenges remain in terms of increasing students' intrinsic interest and understanding of the importance of English in various aspects of life.

### Suggestion

Based on the findings and discussion stated in the previous chapter, The researcher would like to give some suggestions to several related parties who are related to this study as follows: Students can develop a favorable mindset and intense drive to acquire English language skills, resulting in more efficient language learning and expanded prospects in the future. Lectures can establish an engaging and encouraging learning atmosphere that cultivates students' optimistic mindset and robust drive to study English as a second language. This technique not only improves the process of learning a language but also equips students with the necessary skills for achieving success in their academic pursuits. Future researchers have the potential to enhance comprehension of the complex elements that impact students' attitudes and motives when it comes to studying English as a foreign language. This knowledge can be utilized to shape educational practices, formulate policies, and implement interventions to improve language learning experiences and outcomes on a worldwide scale.

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