

# Globalization and College Students' Attitudes towards Learning English in an Indonesian Context

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**ABSTRACT:** Learners' attitudes towards learning English as a global language have been widely discussed, yet little is known about this in Indonesia. This study aims to address this knowledge gap by exploring the responses of Indonesian university students to a survey on their attitudes toward learning English in the context of globalization. A total of 333 students volunteered to participate, representing diverse departments within a faculty at a university in Central Java Province, Indonesia. To collect data, we carefully adapted and designed a questionnaire, which was administered online using Google Forms. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The analysis suggests that college learners and users of English in Indonesia hold a positive attitude towards learning the language. We also provide pedagogical implications.

**KEYWORDS:** Globalization; college students; attitude; English; Indonesian context

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## 1. Introduction

The rapid flow of globalization has transformed the world into a global village, where English is becoming the most commonly used language for communication across countries and cultures. As a result, English is evolving into a global language shared by diverse non-native speaker groups rather than being dominated solely by native English-speaking countries like the United Kingdom and the United States [1]. The use of English as the primary medium of global communication has turned people into intercultural communicators who share their social realities within their respective cultures [2]. English is now a common language worldwide, even in countries traditionally known for their cultural nationalism, like Japan, where English is learned, taught, and used in various contexts [3]. It is increasingly likely that English will become the world's common language.

Globalization has impacted various aspects of life, including politics, communication, social sciences, education, and technology [4]. With these changes, more people are encouraged to learn and use English. Some seek job opportunities abroad, while others are driven by cultural and political interests [2]. Millions of students pursue higher education abroad [4], and nations must adapt to internationalization in education to thrive [5]. In this evolving landscape, proficiency in English is crucial for both individuals and societies.

Approximately 375 million people worldwide speak English as their first language, and over 750 million speak it as a second language [6]. In nearly 70 countries, English is an official

language and the first language of many. English is often considered an economically valuable language, providing access to various career fields, such as business and tourism [7]. In Indonesia, English is considered a foreign language and has, in some cases, been excluded from primary education curricula for several years [8]. One crucial factor to examine regarding English's current status as a global language is attitude. Attitude, as defined by psychologists, is "a learned tendency to evaluate things in a certain way" [9]. These evaluations can be positive, negative, or mixed and have been the subject of extensive research in the context of foreign language learning [10–12]. Attitudes are influenced by various factors, including social and educational contexts [13], and are subject to change under specific conditions [14].

This study focuses on the attitudes of EFL (English as a Foreign Language) college students toward learning English as a global language, whether their attitudes are positive, negative, or fall along a spectrum. Given English's growing importance in the world, it is essential to understand how Indonesian students perceive English. Therefore, this study aims to investigate their attitudes toward learning English, particularly in the context of globalization. While research on this topic has been conducted worldwide, it's necessary to review some related studies in the existing literature to provide context. In Europe, Karahan [15] conducted a study in the Turkish EFL context, addressing language attitudes and their impact on language learning. The study revealed that Turkish EFL students had slightly positive attitudes toward English, with some variations based on gender. However, attitudes did not consistently translate into high motivation for learning the language.

Dörnyei [3] conducted a large-scale study in Hungary involving over 13,000 language learners. This research tracked changing language attitudes and motivations due to globalization. The study showed that English became increasingly associated with cosmopolitanism and career success among Hungarians. In other parts of the world, such as South America, positive attitudes toward learning English prevail due to the language's importance in the job market [19-20]. Similar trends were observed in Kuwait, Taiwan, and Malaysia [23–25]. Indonesian students have also shown favorable attitudes toward learning English [26–28]. The impact of globalization has influenced learner attitudes toward learning English. The ability to communicate trans-culturally and trans-nationally is now a hallmark of global citizens. To stay competitive in this globalized world, individuals need to embrace English as a global language. This study seeks to explore the attitudes of Indonesian college students toward learning English in the context of globalization. It is essential to understand their perspectives as English continues to play a significant role in the modern world.

## **2. Materials and Methods**

### *2.1. Participants.*

With reference to the aims of the current study, a survey study using a five-point Likert scale questionnaire was conducted online with the help of Google Form. As many as 333 students were voluntarily recruited from diverse study programs within a faculty at a big university in the town of Purwokerto, Indonesia (Table 1).

**Table 1.** Demographic profile of the research respondents.

Aspect	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age	17-19	182	54.65
	20-22	143	42.94
	23-25	5	1.50
	26-28	2	0.60
	29-31	1	0.30
Sex	Male	63	18.92
	Female	270	81.08
Major	Primary education	93	27.93
	English language	54	16.22
	Indonesian language	67	20.12
	Mathematics	43	12.91
	Biology	22	6.61
	Geography	21	6.31
	Others	23	9.90
	Length of study	Semester 1	164
Semester 3		49	14.71
Semester 5		69	20.72
Semester 7		51	15.32

## 2.2. Data collection.

### 2.2.1. Measures.

As the study was done in light of globalization, an attitudinal questionnaire was prepared on the basis of globalization aspects [22]. The questionnaire was carefully adapted from Geddes [21] and designed. Two parameters to check data collection instrument quality, i.e., validity and reliability, were employed. In terms of validity, logical validity (giving attention to construct and content issues) was applied through instrument blue-print. The items cover the following key aspects: 1) English teacher (e.g. “Having an Indonesian teacher of English has a positive effect on my attitude”); 2) native speaker of English (e.g. “I have a positive view towards native speakers of English and their cultures”); 3) English language use (e.g. “I feel comfortable when using English”); 4) English learning (e.g. “Studying English leads to anxiety”); 5) test of English (e.g. “Studying for tests like the TOEIC and TOEFL leads to anxiety”); 6) role of English (e.g. “More emphasis needs to be placed upon English in Indonesia”). Reliability check was run through instrument try-out (to 32 respondents) and analysis of the collected data using the split-half technique. The  $r_{xy}$  coefficient was 0.89, larger than  $r_{\text{-tabel}}$  values both at  $\alpha = .005$  and  $.001$ . Thus, the instrument tried-out was considered reliable. The questionnaire consisting of twenty-five items was then administered to collect the data.

### 2.2.2. Ethical considerations.

Survey permit was asked from chairs of the study programs. A written informed consent was also attached to the questionnaires to allow for a voluntary response sample.

## 2.3. Data analysis.

Data on response to the online questionnaires were gathered, organized, and cleaned in Excel. The data were then analyzed using descriptive statistics.

### 3. Results and Discussion

With respect to the research question, the results of this study are organized and discussed as follows.

#### 3.1. Attitude of college students towards learning English as a global language: quantity.

The data analysis revealed that Indonesian students' attitudes toward learning English as a global language are classified as "Good" (positive), with an average score of 3.98, as measured on a 1 to 5 rating scale. In terms of intensity, this finding aligns relatively consistently with previous studies on similar topics. For instance, in a study involving 52 respondents recruited through cluster sampling, students generally exhibited positive attitudes toward learning English [21]. Similar trends have been observed in other studies, such as those referenced in [29–30], which demonstrate positive attitudes among learners of English as a first or second language. When considering the context of foreign language learning, the current study's findings affirm the results of previous studies, as indicated by references [15, 22, 26–28]. However, it is worth noting that the present study specifically examines attitudes toward learning English as a global language, as reflected in the questionnaire items used. We hope that future research will continue to explore attitudes toward learning English as a global language. Delving into the findings in more detail, it is noteworthy that among the twenty-five questionnaire items, one achieved the highest average rating of 4.6. A total of 211 respondents (or 63%) expressed a strong preference for item number 7, which pertains to their attitude toward developing good English-speaking skills (Table 2). This is indeed encouraging news, as one of the primary goals of learning a foreign language like English should be the ability to communicate orally. The participating college students' positive attitude toward speaking English is a valuable asset that should be nurtured to achieve the best possible learning outcomes. A positive attitude toward oral communication in English greatly facilitates the development of fluency [32].

**Table 2.** Top 5 Favored-questionnaire Items.

Item No.	Item	Response (%)
7	I would like to become similar to people who speak English as a native language	63
10	Studying English will help me to understand people from all over the world	60
15	I learn English because I want to find better jobs	58
18	I am sure I will be able to learn English well.	57
21	Indonesian people need to learn English	55

#### 3.2. Attitude of College Students towards Learning English as a Global Language: Types

The qualitative aspect of the current study findings indicates that, between two types of language learning orientation (native speaker vs. target culture), the respondents leaned more towards a native speaker orientation. In terms of the type, this study raises questions about why learners of English in Indonesia tend to be more native speaker-oriented. It is likely that Indonesian learners of English require the language for communication with speakers from all over the world. As the study states, "If learners have favorable attitudes towards the speakers of the language, they will seek more contact with them" [31]. This reflects an immediate need they must fulfill, making English instrumental in their orientation. This tendency can be

attributed to the status of English in Indonesia as a foreign language. Consequently, learners of English in Indonesia may not think about, or have less interest in, the target culture.

Despite the fact that "second language" and "foreign language" are often used interchangeably in language learning literature, this paper treats them as distinct concepts. Under this perspective, English in Malaysia or India serves as a second language. A review of the literature reveals no confirmation that attitudes towards the target culture are more positive among learners of English in second language settings compared to those in foreign language contexts. This creates a compelling case for conducting a study on this topic, as there is a possibility that in communities where English is a second language, learners may lean more towards a target culture orientation. The current study has a few limitations, with one of the weakest points being the small sample size, which includes only one faculty from a single college. Future research should aim to gather larger and more diverse samples from different colleges. It is exciting to anticipate studies on attitudes of second language learners, rather than foreign language learners, towards the target culture in the near future.

#### 4. Conclusions

This paper outlines the results of a survey which was carried out to examine the attitudes towards learning English as a global language among university students in Indonesia. The study shows that the Indonesian college students have a favorable attitude towards learning English as a global language. Such a positive attitude is made possible because they live in a country where English serves as a foreign language while at the same time they want to communicate with people who speak English for a reason(s) in relation to globalization in many aspects of life. This attainment should be maintained and improved in order that the college graduates can take the competitive advantage in the international labor market.

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#### Competing Interest

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

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