

# Language Learning Attitudes and Reading Comprehension Achievement at A Private Junior High School: A Correlational Study

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*First Received: 20-06-2022*

*Final Proof Received: 20-07-2022*

## Abstract

The attitudes of learners influence their ability to acquire English as a foreign language. In terms of its impact on learners, a good attitude leads to successful learning, whereas a negative attitude leads to failure. During the preliminary study, the researcher found that those who were eager to learn could do the reading test well. On the other hand, the students who were not welcome to English had difficulty to understand and finish the test. Therefore, the research aimed to investigate the relationship between language learning attitude and reading comprehension achievement. This research was conducted at the seventh-grade students at a private junior high school in East Java, Indonesia. The population of this study was 153 students and the sample taken was 43 students. The method used in this research was quantitative method with correlational design. The instruments used to gather the data were language learning attitude questionnaire and midterm examination as reading comprehension test. Both scores were analyzed and calculated using statistical procedure of Pearson Product Moment correlation. The result showed that there was a moderate positive correlation between language learning attitude and reading comprehension achievement ( $r_{xy} = +0.349$ ). The hypothesis testing showed that p-value (0.022) was less than the level of significance (0.05) which means that  $H_0$  was rejected and  $H_a$  was accepted. The research findings indicated that there was a correlation language learning attitude and reading comprehension achievement of the seventh-grade students.

**Keywords:** achievement; attitude; correlation; language learning; reading comprehension.

Learning language is the important part of human life. Tavit (2009) states that expressing our thoughts, hopes and even aspirations can be happened only by knowing the language. To be able to understand the information and other's idea, the use of universal language is

needed. English is the global language that is used as a tool of communication by most people around the world. In Indonesia itself, English takes role as a foreign language and has been one of the subject taught at school for a long time. Brown (2000) defines foreign languages

as those in which students lack a ready-made environment for communicating outside of the classroom. By mastering English, students may get benefits, such as making communication with students or people from another country easier, boosting students' confidence, as well as widening their knowledge related to education and culture since most of the books and courses are in English.

The fact that the Indonesian government has introduced the most recent curriculum, known as Kurikulum 2013, clearly shows that children have never studied English formally before the seventh-grade. As a result, English is one of the topics required in middle school (junior and senior high school), as stated in Permendikbud No. 35 year 2018 about Kurikulum 2013 in Junior High School. In studying English, students should master four language skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing, as well as three language components: grammar, vocabulary, and pronunciation.

On the one hand, according to Barnett cited by Yuliastuti (2016), reading is a critical ability in foreign and second language programs. Additionally, he asserts that reading is viewed as a form of communication, as a mental activity, as the reader's active engagement in the construction of meaning, as strategy manipulation, and as a receptive rather than a passive ability. Reading can be viewed as a prerequisite for comprehending the language used in written communication. Reading can be defined as an action that involves both the reader and the text, in which the reader is fully engaged with the text in order to elicit the meaning of the written words.

Good reading comprehension is a necessary skill since it allows English students to gain new knowledge, information, and wisdom from a wide range of subjects in numerous literary works (Riyanto et al., 2015). Reading comprehension is the process by which an author expresses his or her ideas in words and the readers perceive the message the author is attempting to convey. As cited by

Riyanto et al. (2015), Nuttal assumes that there are five reading abilities that must be mastered to fully comprehend the author's literary work: identifying the main concept, detecting details, determining inference, comprehending vocabulary items, and referencing. However, each reader's comprehension will differ slightly. Because each student's method of processing written language differs, achievement varies from student to student (Montgomery et al., 2007).

The attitudes of learners influence their ability to acquire English as a foreign language. Attitude is a mental and neural state of readiness that is organized by experience and has a direct or dynamic influence on the individual's response to all objects and events with which it is associated (Ajzen, 2005; Kartikaningtyas, 2015; Muchtar, 2015). Attitude includes cognition and affective values toward a specific item, and it also influences behavior when someone is encountered with a particular circumstance. The degree of positive or negative attitude changes based on how learners acquire the language (Paradewari & Mbato, 2018). In terms of its impact on learners, a good attitude leads to successful learning, whereas a negative attitude leads to failure.

Attitude consists of cognitive, affective, and behavioral. Wenden as cited in Abidin et al. (2012), explains that cognitive relates to perception of learners, its components include the beliefs and thoughts about things, people, event, and knowledge. Affective involves learners' emotions, sentiment and feeling towards an object, such as the feeling of like or dislike of something. Then, the behavioral deals with the action or special move taken when learner is in certain circumstances.

A preliminary study held on September 20th until October 18th 2021 was carried out at a private junior high school in Sidoarjo, East Java. According to the seventh-grade teacher, the students' attitudes toward learning and understanding the English language are different. Some of them appeared to be eager to

embrace the teaching materials. Others, on the other hand, did not actively participate in the learning process. As a result, students who are excited about learning English have a superior knowledge of the new subject. Students who did not actively participate, however, had difficulty mastering the content. In addition, the teacher stated that there were students who engaged well but did not understand the topic. This is how the teacher dealt with the situation when teaching English. This could be due to the teaching technique or the students themselves. In other words, the learners' success or failure in language acquisition is determined not only by the teacher's role in running the course, but also by the students' willingness to pay attention to the course. Here is the reason why researcher is interested to explore more about this topic.

There are some earlier research discussing similar topics to the current study. The resemblance is in the research discussion, however, Yuliasuti (2016) employed procedure text in measuring students' reading comprehension achievement, and the subject is senior high school students. The correlation coefficient was  $0 < 0.623 < 1$ , indicating a positive association, according to the findings of this correlation study. This suggests that while X variable (attitude toward learning English) rises, Y variable rises as well (Reading Comprehension Achievement). In other words, when students had a positive attitude, they performed well in reading, and vice versa.

Another study dealing with correlation among students' attitude and reading comprehension done by Novari (2018) with the title "*The Impacts of Students' Reading Habit and Their Language Attitudes toward Reading Comprehension*". Novari used statistics, Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test, for examining the normality, and Anova Table. Data collection was done by providing questionnaire of reading habit and language attitude to eleventh grade students at Madrasah Aliyah Mathla'ul Anwar, MAN 1 Pandeglang and SMA Mathla'ul Anwar Menes. The result is that reading habit and

language attitudes influenced students' reading comprehension which is proven by the score of  $\text{Sig.} = 0.000 < 0.05$ .

The present research is different since it focuses on the correlation between language learning attitude and reading comprehension achievement of junior high school students in Sidoarjo. There are six classes in total at the private junior high school, the research was only be conducted to two classes of seventh grade students. They are accessible to be the respondents of the research because the English teacher gave permission to the researcher to conduct the research. Besides, since they are still in transitional phase from elementary, where they did not get exposed enough to English, which makes their attitudes toward language learning diverse. Some of them had high enthusiasm and strong willingness to learn English language, while others didn't have that much spirit to follow the class. During the preliminary study, when the teacher conducted midterm test in odd semester, which was reading comprehension test, the researcher found that those who were eager to learn could do the test well. On the other hand, the students who were not welcome to English had difficulty to understand and finish the test.

Based on the reasons above, the researcher has an interest to conduct a research in aiming to investigate whether there is a correlation between language learning attitude and reading comprehension of the seventh-grade students at the private junior high school in Sidoarjo, East Java. In addition, the researcher expected the research to bring some benefits in learning English. The findings of this study might contribute to the successful of the learning language process since by knowing the students' attitudes towards language learning and its correlation to reading comprehension achievement, the teachers can apply the suitable method to help improving students' attitude on language learning.

## **Method**

### ***Type of Research***

The correlation quantitative design was used in this study. Quantitative research designs are frequently used to investigate the relationship between variables (Baker, 2017). Quantitative data can be obtained by completing a multiple-choice questionnaire and then counting the number of correct responses. According to Walliman (2021) a correlation design is used to study a relationship between two variables, and the outcome could be no correlation, positive or negative.

**Population and Sample**

The population of this research was the students at the private junior high school in Sidoarjo, East Java. In this research, the researcher chose seventh grade which consisted of approximately 43 students, from class A and B, as the research respondents. Moreover, the seventh grade students were chosen purposively as the respondents since they were still in the transitional phase from elementary school, when they were not sufficiently exposed to English. The researcher believes that they might have a high level of interest and a strong inclination to study languages, including English, during this time.

**Data Collection Technique**

In this study, a questionnaire was employed to collect information regarding the students' attitudes. The questionnaire measures three components of attitude which are behavioral component, cognitive component and affective component. The questionnaire items are adopted from Abidin et al. (2012) that consist of 30 items. The responses of the respondents were rated using a Likert scale. To gain the data of reading comprehension achievement, the researcher used a teacher-made test analyzed the respondents' reading scores to determine whether they received an outstanding, good, fair, bad, or fail rating on the reading test based on their performance. The following criteria are used to categorize their performance:

Table 1. The Classification of Score Level

Range Score	Predicate	Description
92-100	A	Excellent
83-91	B	Good
74-82	C	Fair
≤ 73	D	Fail

**Data Analysis**

To check whether the data were distributed normally or not, the Skewness value is divided with Std. Error of Skewness from descriptive statistics table. Therefore, the equation for normality test is:

$$-2 < \frac{\text{Skewness value}}{\text{Std. Error}} < 2$$

Both correlation coefficient was found and the hypotheses were tested by using Pearson Product Moment Correlation. Bungin (2005) notes that this formula is used to find the correlation coefficient between two variables. The Pearson Product Moment Correlation formula is:

$$r_{xy} = \frac{n \sum xy - (\sum x \sum y)}{\sqrt{[n \sum x^2 - (\sum x)^2][n \sum y^2 - (\sum y)^2]}}$$

In which;

- $r_{xy}$  : Correlation coefficient Product Moment
- $\sum_{xy}$  : The sum of the products of x and y
- n : The sum of the sample
- $\sum_x$  : The sum of the x variable
- $\sum_y$  : The sum of the y variable

**Results and Discussion**

**The Students' Attitude toward Language Learning**

To acquire the data of students' attitude toward language learning, 30 questions adapted from Abidin et al. (2012) were employed. After calculating, it was found that the highest score is 133 and the lowest is 79. The mean score is 106.74. It can be shown in the distribution table of language learning attitude below.

Table 2. Distribution of Attitude Score

Interval Score	f	%	Attitude Criteria
130-150	1	2%	Very Positive
105-129	21	49%	Positive



80-104	20	47%	Neutral
55-79	1	2%	Negative
30-54	0	0%	Very Negative

The majority of students in class VII at the private junior high school in Sidoarjo were considered to have favorable attitudes toward language study, as indicated by the fact that 49 percent of their attitudes fall into this group (105-129). The remaining 47% of students polled had an apathetic stance on the topic. The remaining students, each comprising 2 percent of the student body, had a pessimistic outlook, while the remaining students, comprising 2 percent of the student body, have a very optimistic outlook. No one had very negative attitudes toward language learning. In general, it is safe to say that the students of the private junior high school in Sidoarjo had a favorable attitude toward the process of learning English.

The description of the language learning attitude of students in each aspect is presented on the data from the attitude questionnaire as follows:

Based on the findings of the average calculation for each behavioral aspect (see Appendix 1), it was determined that two statements had the lowest average value and two statements had the highest average value. The average rating for the statement “I like to give opinions during English lesson.” is 2.98, with 34.9% of students holding a neutral opinion. In contrast, 32.6% of students were opposed, and 2.3% were highly opposed. On the other hand, approximately 25.6% of students agree and 4% strongly agree with the statement that they enjoy giving their opinions during English sessions. It can be noted that not many seventh-grade learners at SMP Muhammadiyah 10 Sidoarjo enjoyed expressing their opinions in English class.

The statement “I am relaxed whenever I have to express my ideas in my English class” also had the lowest average score of 2.98. 51.2% of students voted to remain neutral. 23.3% of students agree with this statement,

and only 2.3% of students strongly agree. In contrast, 16.3% of students disagreed, with 7% strongly disagreeing. It can be argued that a significant number of students are anxious about expressing themselves in English class.

Moreover, the result of those two statements above is supported by the result of the statement “I feel embarrassed to speak English in front of other students”, which had the highest average score 3.93. When required to speak English in front of the class, 34.9 % of students agree and 34.9 % strongly agree that they experience embarrassment. In contrast, 20.9% of students voted to remain neutral. In contrast, only 7% of students disagreed with this statement, and only 2.3% of students strongly disagreed. The majority of students feel uncomfortable speaking English in front of the class.

Even though many of them were still embarrassed to speak English, they could listen to English lessons well. This is proven by the statement “I am able to make myself pay attention during studying English” with an average score of 3.93. More than half of the class had a favorable opinion, with 34.9 percent agreeing and 32.6 percent strongly agreeing. 25.6% preferred to be indifferent, while 7% felt unable to listen to English classes.

Based on the results of the average calculation for each cognitive aspect (see Appendix 2), it was determined that there is one statement for each the lowest score and the highest score. Statement “I summarize the important points in the English is being taught” had the lowest average score, which is 2.95. More than half of the class (65.1%) chose to be neutral towards this statement. 16.3% of the student held the view that they disagreed, and 2.3% strongly disagreed. When asked, only 16.3% of students felt they properly highlighted the most key points when learning English.

On the other hand, statement “I have more knowledge and understanding when studying English” got the highest score, which is 4.16. More than half of the population, specifically 51.2% of students, are of the

opinion that learning English will broaden their knowledge, and 32.6% of those students hold a very strong opinion on the matter. On this issue, only 16.3% of respondents chose neutral. There was not a single student who opposed or strongly disagreed with the statement.

Based on the results of the average calculation for each affective aspect (see Appendix 3), it was determined that there is one statement for each the lowest mean score and the highest score. Statement “I don’t get anxious when I have to answer a question in my English class” had the lowest average score 3.14. There are just 16 people who feel positively about this remark, in which 23.3% of students agree with it and 14% feel very passionately about it. Meanwhile, 30.2% of students went with the option of remaining neutral. In contrast, 27.9% of students disagreed with the statement that there was no anxiousness when they had to answer questions in English class, and 4.7 % of those students strongly disagreed with the statement.

Statement “I wish I could speak English fluently” got the highest average score, which is 4.37. More than half of the population, or 53.5% of students, strongly believe that they would like to be able to speak fluent English. After that, a total of 30.2% of people feel the same way and agree with the same thing. Only 16.3 percent of respondents opted to be neutral regarding this remark. There was not a single person who disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement.

**Students’ Reading Comprehension Achievement**

The data of reading comprehension achievement were obtained from a teacher-made test, which was midterm examination that was held on March 09, 2022. The midterm was about descriptive text. From the table below, it shows that the highest score is 95 and the lowest is 13. The average score from both classes is 62.70.

Table 3. Distribution of Reading Comprehension

Achievement				
Range Score	f	%	Predicate	Description
92-100	2	4.7%	A	Excellent
83-91	7	16.3%	B	Good
74-82	7	16.3%	C	Fair
≤ 73	27	62.8%	D	Fail

Based on the result of midterm examination illustrated in distribution table, there were a total of 2 students, which is 4.7% of the total population, who received exceptional grades. Only 16.3%, or roughly 7 of them, had good grades. 16.3% population, which is equal to 7 students, received fair grade. The cut score is 74, so there are 27 students or about 62.8% of population who failed the midterm examination and need to do the remedial. It means that only few students passed the test and had satisfactory grade, while most of them had unsatisfactory grade.

**Correlation Coefficient**

In order to find the correlation coefficient, the language learning attitude scores (X) and reading comprehension achievement (Y) were calculated using Pearson Product Moment Correlation statistical procedure. Before doing the calculation, the data were tabulated and tested to find whether they were distributed normally or not. The normality test used in this study was Skewness Test. Below is the Skewness value obtained from descriptive statistics of Language Learning Attitude (X) and Reading Comprehension Achievement (Y) using SPSS version 24.

Table 4. Descriptive Statistics Table

Statistics			
		Statistics	
		Language Learning Attitude	Reading Compehension Achievement
N	Valid	43	43
	Missing	0	0
Mean		106.74	62.70

Std. Error of Mean	2.006	3.255
Median	107.00	66.00
Mode	108a	62
Std. Deviation	13.151	21.341
Variance	172.957	455.454
Skewness	.082	-.594
Std. Error of Skewness	.361	.361
Kurtosis	-.494	-.561
Std. Error of Kurtosis	.709	.709
Percentiles		
25	97.00	47.00
50	107.00	66.00
75	117.00	82.00

a. Multiple modes exist. The smallest value is shown

Below is normality test for language learning attitude (X). The skewness value was 0.082 and Std. Error was 0.361.

The result  $\frac{0.082}{0.361} = 0.23$  which was less than 2. Therefore, the data of language learning attitude were distributed normally, and they could be used for the next step of research.

Below is normality test for reading comprehension achievement (Y). The skewness value was -0.594 and Std. Error was 0.361.

The result  $\frac{-0.594}{0.361} = -1.64$  which was within range  $-2 < x < 2$ . Therefore, the data of reading comprehension achievement were distributed normally, and they could be used for the next step of research.

Table 5. SPSS of Correlation Coefficient Correlations

Correlations	
Language Learning Attitude	Reading Comprehension Achievement

Language Learning Attitude	Pearson Correlation	1	.349*
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.022
	N	43	43
Reading Comprehension Achievement	Pearson Correlation	.349*	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.022	
	N	43	43

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

From 43 respondents, the index value of correlation was found 0.349. According to the table of correlation interpretations (Bungin, 2018), 0.349 is classified into moderate positive class of +0.30 --- +0.49. This means that there is a positive correlation between two variables, with the level of correlation is moderate. In other words, the attitude of students towards learning English might play role in students' reading comprehension achievement.

To test the hypothesis, the p-value (sig.) is compared to the level of significance (α). The researcher used level of significance 0.05 for this research. The formulation of hypothesis testing is as follows:

1. If p-value < 0.05, H0 was rejected and Ha was accepted which means that there was a relationship between language learning attitude and their reading comprehension achievement of seventh grade students at the private junior high school in Sidoarjo.
2. If p-value > 0.05, H0 was accepted and Ha was rejected which means that there was no relationship between language learning attitude and their reading comprehension achievement of seventh grade students at the private junior high school in Sidoarjo.

The p-value from the calculation of SPSS (see Table 5) is 0.022. The p-value is less than the level of significance (0.022 < 0.05) which means that there is a relationship between language learning attitude and reading

comprehension achievement of seventh grade students at the private junior high school in Sidoarjo.

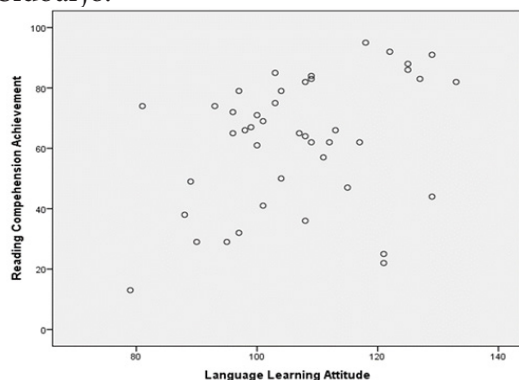


Figure 1. Scatterplot of the Correlation

The study also showed that there was a favorable association between the attitude toward acquiring a foreign language and the level of success in reading comprehension of seventh grade students at SMP Muhammadiyah 10 Sidoarjo. It can be seen from the scatterplot (see Figure 1) that the data show an uphill pattern from left to right. It means that the increase of X variable (language learning attitude) is followed by the increase of Y variable (reading comprehension achievement).

This research finding is in line with what Ellis (1999) states that learner attitudes influence the level of L2 proficiency achieved by individual learners. Students may find the lesson enjoyable if they approach language learning with a positive attitude. They will be able to learn the language itself as a result. On the other hand, it appears that students pay less attention to the teaching and learning activity when they have a negative attitude toward learning English. Both of these ideas contribute to their overall score in reading comprehension. The students who had a pleasant attitude did well in reading. The students who had a poor attitude, however, received low reading scores.

The outcome of this study is in accordance with Yuliasuti (2016). Her result showed that when students had a positive attitude towards learning English, they surely would perform well in reading. However,

this study's result stands in contrast with Indrawati et al. (2020). They state that there is no correlation between students' attitude and English achievement. This study has proven that their statement does not apply in the private junior high school in Sidoarjo.

The result of students' attitude scores and their reading comprehension scores varied. For instance, AZ (No. 1). He got the high attitude score (129 of 150) which indicates positive attitude. For the reading comprehension score, he got 91 which is considered as excellent score. The one who got the highest score in reading comprehension, AHR (No. 30), besides achieving 95 in midterm examination, she also had relatively positive attitude score (118 of 150). These findings strengthen what Novari (2018) states that students' attitudes play a role in determining whether or not they are willing to participate in reading instruction and other related activities. Another example is AAS (No. 28). She was the only student who got the lowest score both in attitude and reading comprehension. Her attitude score is 79 which is considered as negative attitude and her reading score is 13 which means she failed in midterm examination. She did not take any enjoyment in the teaching-learning activity that she was participating in. Because of this, her score on the reading comprehension section was quite poor. This showed that there was a considerable correlation between the students' negative attitude toward learning English and their low accomplishment levels in terms of reading comprehension. The students who had a negative attitude probably did not have a good understanding of the significance of learning English even if it is a required subject (Abidin et al., 2012).

However, there were 12 students classified as having positive attitude got reading comprehension score below the cut-score. The researcher talked more with the English teacher to back up the results of the study. During the discussion, the teacher said that it was hard for those students to understand



the reading text mostly because of the lack of vocabulary. They always paid more attention to what the teacher said, but when it came time for the test, their English scores were lower. It can be said that their score on the attitude questionnaire had nothing to do with their reading score. Even though they had a good attitude, they had a very low reading score compared to other students. It could happen because of other factors outside language learning attitude which affect them.

### Conclusion

It can be concluded that there was a moderate positive correlation between language learning attitude and reading comprehension achievement of seventh grade students at the private junior high school in Sidoarjo. Success in language learning, and particularly in reading comprehension, is influenced by the learner's attitude toward language acquisition as well as their cognitive abilities. Students must therefore be extremely motivated, and teachers must work hard to increase students' desire to learn this language. Their overall reading comprehension grade is influenced by this concept. Students with positive attitude perform well on reading exams. But the students who exhibit negative attitudes score poorly in reading. The first step before deciding which teaching approach to use in the classroom is to build students' favorable attitudes toward studying English. In turn, teaching strategies should be selected based on the attitudes of these students. Therefore, the attitude of students towards learning English has proven to play role in students' reading comprehension achievement.

### Acknowledgement

The author would like to express her gratitude to her advisor, and peers, as well as to all of the participants in this study, for their insightful remarks and ideas. Without their support as well as their willingness, this study would never have been completed.

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