

Language Attitudes Among Indonesian University Students in an Archipelagic Learning Context

Masda Surti Simatupang^{1*}, Ramot Peter²

¹English Literature, Universitas Kristen Indonesia, Jakarta, Indonesia;

Email: masdasimatupang@uki.ac.id

²Character Building Development Center, Universitas Bina Nusantara, Jakarta, Indonesia;

Email: ramot.peter@binus.ac.id

*Corresponding Author: masdasimatupang@uki.ac.id

Abstract. Indonesia's multilingual and archipelagic setting places university students within overlapping local, national, and global language environments. This quantitative pilot study examined students' attitudes toward English and whether these attitudes differed according to regional and linguistic background. A cross-sectional questionnaire was completed by 45 undergraduates from two universities in Jakarta. The nine-item language-attitude scale demonstrated good internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.834$). Students reported highly positive attitudes toward English ($M = 4.24$, $SD = 0.56$), particularly regarding academic success, future careers, international communication, personal development, and access to knowledge. However, only 53.3% felt confident using English in class, while 37.8% reported speaking anxiety. The regional-origin difference did not remain significant after Holm adjustment. A first-language difference remained statistically significant, but the local/other language subgroup included only four students and therefore cannot support a stable population inference. Most participants also believed that English could be learned without losing local-language identity. These findings identify a clear gap between valuing English and feeling confident when using it publicly, while emphasizing the need for larger and more linguistically balanced multi-island research.

Keywords: Archipelagic Learning; English Learning; Language Attitude; Multilingual Identity; Speaking Anxiety.

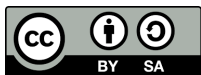
Received: February 10, 2026

Revised: April 14, 2026

Received: June 15, 2026

Online Available: July 30, 2026

Current ver.: July 30, 2026



Copyright: © 2025 by the authors. Submitted for possible open access publication under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY SA) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/>)

1. Introduction

Indonesia's higher education system operates within a multilingual and geographically dispersed society. University students bring different regional histories, first languages, educational opportunities, and levels of exposure to English. English is used not only as a university subject but also as a means of accessing academic literature, professional opportunities, international communication, and global knowledge. Motivation to learn global English is therefore often connected to future identities and mobility rather than attachment to a single native-speaking community (Dornyei & Al-Hoorie, 2017). The archipelagic context makes language learning both connected and unequal. Students move among regional languages, Bahasa Indonesia, and English across homes, campuses, and digital environments. These movements may broaden access to information and communication, yet educational resources and opportunities are not distributed evenly. An archipelagic perspective therefore

draws attention to the relationship between local identity, national participation, and global aspiration rather than treating Indonesian students as a linguistically homogeneous population.

Language attitude is central to understanding how students position English within these environments. It includes beliefs about the value of English, emotional responses to learning, confidence in using the language, and anxiety during public performance. Positive attitudes can encourage persistence and participation, but they do not automatically produce confidence. Enjoyment and anxiety may coexist, particularly when students must speak before lecturers and peers and risk negative evaluation (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014; Dewaele et al., 2018). Attitudes may also vary across regional and linguistic backgrounds because students encounter different language ecologies, educational experiences, and opportunities to use English. Previous research has examined language attitudes, classroom emotion, and multilingual identity, but evidence from Indonesian higher education remains uneven across regional and linguistic groups. This quantitative pilot study therefore addresses two research questions: (1) What attitudes do university students report toward English, particularly its academic and professional value, classroom confidence, and speaking anxiety? and (2) Do language attitudes differ according to regional origin, first language, language used at home and on campus, or length of English study? The study is exploratory because it uses a small convenience sample from two Jakarta universities and includes highly unequal first-language groups.

2. Literature Review

Language attitude and classroom emotion

Language attitude includes learners' evaluations of a language, its usefulness, its speakers, and the experience of learning it. Future-oriented language identities are associated with intended effort and achievement, although the strength of these relationships depends on context and measurement (Al-Hoorie, 2018). In higher education, students may value English because it supports academic participation, employment, international communication, and access to knowledge. These instrumental and aspirational evaluations provide an important foundation for sustained language learning. Positive evaluation is not identical to confident performance. Foreign-language anxiety is negatively associated with achievement, while supportive classroom interaction and enjoyment can strengthen participation (Botes et al., 2020; Dewaele et al., 2018; Teimouri et al., 2019). Willingness to communicate is situational: learners may value English but remain silent when they feel exposed, lack confidence, or do not perceive themselves as legitimate speakers (Khajavy et al., 2018; MacIntyre et al., 1998; Norton & De Costa, 2018). The distinction between valuing English and using it confidently is therefore central to this study.

Multilingual identity and archipelagic learning

Indonesian students use English alongside Bahasa Indonesia and regional languages. Translanguaging perspectives emphasize that multilingual speakers draw flexibly on their available linguistic resources rather than operating through completely separate language systems (Cenoz & Gorter, 2017; Wei, 2018). However, multilingual practices should not be romanticized or treated as identical across contexts; their educational value depends on institutional expectations, access, and pedagogical design (Fuster & Bardel, 2024). Local languages should therefore be understood as resources for meaning and identity, not as

deficiencies that prevent English learning (MacSwan, 2017). An archipelagic learning lens extends this multilingual perspective by focusing on movement and connection among languages, institutions, and communities. English can provide symbolic and material opportunities, but learners' investment also depends on whether institutions recognize their identities and provide equitable access to participation (Darvin & Norton, 2015). Regional origin and first-language background may consequently be associated with different attitudes, although such differences must be interpreted cautiously when samples are small or uneven.

3. Research Methods

Design and participants

This study used a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design and was conducted as a pilot project. The design was selected to describe students' attitudes toward English and explore whether attitude scores differed across selected regional and linguistic background categories at one point in time. As a pilot study, it was intended to assess preliminary patterns, evaluate the usefulness of the questionnaire, and inform the sampling strategy for a larger multi-island investigation. The cross-sectional design supports analysis of associations and group differences but does not establish temporal order or causality (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). Participants were 45 undergraduate students from two private universities in Jakarta, Indonesia: 25 students (55.6%) from Universitas Kristen Indonesia and 20 (44.4%) from Universitas Bina Nusantara. The convenience sample included 29 women and 16 men, with a mean age of 20.62 years ($SD = 1.86$; range = 18-27). Twenty-five students (55.6%) were enrolled in English-related programs. Thirty participants came from Java and 15 from outside Java; 41 reported Bahasa Indonesia as their first language and four reported a local or another first language. The unequal regional and first-language composition is consistent with the pilot character of the study and limits generalization.

Instrument and measures

The questionnaire included demographic items and two groups of Likert-type statements scored from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Item construction followed established guidance on defining constructs, using clear wording, and examining internal consistency (Boateng et al., 2018; Dornyei & Taguchi, 2010). The nine-item language-attitude scale covered interest in English, academic and career value, classroom confidence, speaking anxiety, personal development, international communication, and access to knowledge. Higher composite scores indicated more positive attitudes. The scale demonstrated good internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.834$). Alpha was interpreted as an index of item consistency rather than evidence of a single latent dimension (McNeish, 2018). Five additional items described multilingual identity and context, including the perceived roles of local language and culture, movement among regional languages, Bahasa Indonesia, and English, the influence of national linguistic diversity, and the compatibility of English learning with local-language identity. This scale produced Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.700$ and was used to provide contextual descriptive evidence for interpreting language attitudes in an archipelagic setting.

Data collection and analysis

Students received information about the study, participated voluntarily, and provided consent before completing the questionnaire. Responses were anonymized and used only for research purposes. The dataset was checked for completeness and consistency before

composite scores were calculated. The study did not collect identifying institutional records, and findings from very small linguistic subgroups were reported cautiously to protect confidentiality and avoid overgeneralization.

Descriptive statistics included frequencies, percentages, means, standard deviations, medians, and ranges. Mann-Whitney tests compared attitude scores by Java versus non-Java origin, Bahasa Indonesia versus local/other first language, language used at home, and language used on campus. A Kruskal-Wallis test examined differences across categories of English-learning duration, and Spearman's rank correlation assessed the ordinal relationship between years of English study and attitude. Holm's sequential adjustment controlled the familywise error rate for the regional and linguistic comparisons (Holm, 1979). Exact p values and effect-size information were retained, and non-significant findings were not interpreted as proof of no difference (Plonsky & Oswald, 2014).

4. Result and Discussion

Participant characteristics

The sample was dominated by women, students from Java, and students who reported Bahasa Indonesia as their first language. More than half were enrolled in English-related programs. Table 1 summarizes the main participant characteristics and confirms that the regional and linguistic groups were unevenly distributed.

Table 1. Participant characteristics.

Characteristic	n or mean	% or range
Age, mean (SD)	20.62 (1.86)	18–27 years
Women / men	29 / 16	64.4 / 35.6
Universitas Kristen Indonesia / Bina Nusantara	25 / 20	55.6 / 44.4
English-related program	25	55.6
Java / outside Java origin	30 / 15	66.7 / 33.3
Bahasa Indonesia / local-other first language	41 / 4	91.1 / 8.9
More than 10 years of English study	28	62.2

Note. Percentages are based on N = 45.

Attitudes, confidence, and background comparisons

The mean language-attitude score was 4.24 (SD = 0.56; median = 4.22; range = 2.22–5.00). Using descriptive cut points developed for this analysis, 42 students (93.3%) were classified as positive, two as neutral, and one as negative. These categories were used only to summarize the distribution and were not externally validated. The strongest evaluations concerned international communication, academic success, future careers, personal development, and access to knowledge. Positive evaluation did not fully extend to oral performance. Only 24 students (53.3%) felt confident using English in class, with a mean confidence score of 3.64 (SD = 0.98). Seventeen students (37.8%) reported speaking anxiety, 12 were neutral, and 16 disagreed with the anxiety statement. The results therefore indicate a gap between recognizing the value of English and feeling comfortable using it publicly. The multilingual identity and context scale had a mean of 3.44 (SD = 0.75). Although only 28.9% reported that a regional language affected how they learned English and 26.7% reported that cultural background affected their attitude, 64.4% believed that Indonesia's linguistic diversity

shaped English learning. Most participants (86.7%) believed that English could be learned without losing local-language identity.

Table 2. Selected language-attitude and multilingual identity indicators.

Indicator	Mean	Agree / Strongly Agree (%)
International communication	4.73	95.6
Future careers	4.62	93.3
Academic success	4.60	97.8
Personal development	4.58	93.3
Knowledge access	4.51	88.9
Confidence using English in class	3.64	53.3
Speaking anxiety	–	37.8
English without loss of local identity	–	86.7

Note. Items used a five-point response scale. Percentages represent agree and strongly agree responses.

Background comparisons showed that students from Java had higher mean attitude scores than students from outside Java (4.39 versus 3.94). The unadjusted Mann-Whitney result was significant ($U = 318.5$, $p = 0.024$; rank-biserial correlation = 0.416), but the Holm-adjusted p value was 0.073. The difference was therefore treated as an exploratory tendency. The first-language comparison remained significant after adjustment: students reporting Bahasa Indonesia as their first language had a mean score of 4.33, compared with 3.31 among the four students reporting a local or other first language (adjusted $p = 0.012$). Because the latter subgroup contained only four participants, the finding is statistically fragile and cannot support a broad linguistic inference. No significant differences were found by language used at home ($p = 0.934$), language used on campus ($p = 0.553$), or English-learning duration ($H = 3.04$, $p = 0.219$). The correlation between years of English study and attitude was positive but non-significant ($\rho = 0.258$, $p = 0.087$).

Table 3. Attitude comparisons by regional and linguistic background.

Comparison	Group Means	Test	p Adjusted p	
Java vs. outside Java	4.39 vs. 3.94	Mann–Whitney	0.024	0.073
Bahasa Indonesia vs. local/other L1	4.33 vs. 3.31	Mann–Whitney	0.003	0.012
Home language groups	–	Mann–Whitney	0.934	–
Campus language groups	–	Mann–Whitney	0.553	–
English-learning duration	–	Kruskal–Wallis	0.219	–

Discussion

Positive valuation and uneven classroom confidence

The first major finding is that students valued English as a resource for academic success, employment, international communication, personal development, and knowledge access. This pattern is consistent with future-oriented motivation for global English and with the view that learners invest in a language when it promises access to valued identities and opportunities (Darvin & Norton, 2015; Dornyei & Al-Hoorie, 2017). In this sample, English was understood less as an isolated classroom subject than as part of students' academic and professional aspirations. The second major finding is the gap between valuing English and performing it confidently. Almost all students expressed positive attitudes, but only slightly more than half felt confident in class and more than one-third reported speaking anxiety. This pattern supports research showing that enjoyment, aspiration, and anxiety are distinct and can occur together (Dewaele & MacIntyre, 2014; Dewaele et al., 2018). Speaking exposes

pronunciation, grammar, fluency, and identity to peer and lecturer evaluation; consequently, a positive attitude does not guarantee willingness to communicate in every situation (Khajavy et al., 2018; MacIntyre et al., 1998). For teaching practice, lecturers should not interpret silence as a lack of interest. Low-risk speaking tasks, preparation time, pair or small-group interaction, supportive correction, and acceptance of diverse intelligible accents may reduce the social cost of participation. These strategies are particularly relevant when students strongly value English but do not yet feel secure or recognized as legitimate speakers (Norton & De Costa, 2018).

Regional and linguistic background differences

The regional-origin difference weakened after adjustment for multiple comparisons, indicating that the initial Java versus non-Java pattern should not be treated as conclusive. The first-language comparison remained statistically significant, but the local/other-language group included only four students. A result based on such an uneven comparison may be strongly influenced by a few observations, differences in prior educational opportunity, or the sampling structure itself. It does not establish that regional languages reduce positive attitudes toward English. No significant differences were identified according to language used at home, language used on campus, or duration of English study. These results suggest that attitude cannot be explained by a single background characteristic in this pilot sample. More balanced recruitment is required to distinguish genuine regional or linguistic patterns from sampling variation. Future studies should include institutions across several island groups and recruit sufficient numbers within each first-language category before conducting group comparisons.

Multilingual coexistence and the archipelagic lens

The most consistent multilingual finding was that students generally viewed English and local-language identity as compatible. This supports an additive rather than competitive interpretation of multilingualism. Regional languages, Bahasa Indonesia, and English may serve different but connected social and educational functions, and multilingual resources can support comprehension, identity, and participation when used strategically (Cenoz & Gorter, 2017; MacSwan, 2017; Wei, 2018). The archipelagic contribution of the study is therefore preliminary but relevant. It highlights how attitudes toward English are formed within relationships among local belonging, national education, and global aspiration. The present Jakarta-based sample cannot represent Indonesia's major island groups, but it identifies the need to examine both connection and inequality in future research. A larger study should combine balanced multi-island sampling with qualitative accounts of how students negotiate language identity, classroom confidence, and access to English-learning opportunities.

5. Conclusion

This quantitative pilot study found that participating university students held strongly positive attitudes toward English, particularly because of its academic, professional, communicative, and personal value. Nevertheless, positive valuation did not automatically translate into confident classroom performance: only 53.3% felt confident using English in class, while 37.8% reported speaking anxiety. Regional origin did not show a statistically robust difference after adjustment, whereas the first-language comparison remained significant but was based on only four students in the local/other-language group and must not be generalized. No significant differences were found according to language used at home, language used on campus, or length of English study. Most participants also believed that

English could be learned without losing local-language identity. These findings support teaching approaches that reduce the social risk of speaking and affirm multilingual identity, while larger and more balanced multi-island research is required to test whether regional and linguistic differences persist.

References

- Al-Hoorie, A. H. (2018). The L2 motivational self system: A meta-analysis. *Studies in Second Language Learning and Teaching*, 8(4), 721–754. <https://doi.org/10.14746/ssllt.2018.8.4.2>
- Boateng, G. O., Neilands, T. B., Frongillo, E. A., Melgar-Quinonez, H. R., & Young, S. L. (2018). Best practices for developing and validating scales for health, social, and behavioral research: A primer. *Frontiers in Public Health*, 6, Article 149. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2018.00149>
- Botes, E., Dewaele, J.-M., & Greiff, S. (2020). The foreign language classroom anxiety scale and academic achievement: An overview of the prevailing literature and a meta-analysis. *Journal for the Psychology of Language Learning*, 2(1), 26–56. <https://doi.org/10.52598/jpll/2/1/3>
- Cenoz, J., & Gorter, D. (2017). Translanguaging as a pedagogical tool in multilingual education. In J. Cenoz, D. Gorter, & S. May (Eds.), *Language awareness and multilingualism* (pp. 309–321). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-02240-6_20
- Creswell, J. W., & Creswell, J. D. (2018). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods approaches* (5th ed.). SAGE.
- Darvin, R., & Norton, B. (2015). Identity and a model of investment in applied linguistics. *Annual Review of Applied Linguistics*, 35, 36–56. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0267190514000191>
- De Costa, P. I., Park, J. S.-Y., & Wee, L. (2019). Linguistic entrepreneurship as affective regime: Organizations, audit culture, and second/foreign language education policy. *Language Policy*, 18, 387–406. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10993-018-9492-4>
- Dewaele, J.-M., & MacIntyre, P. D. (2014). The two faces of Janus? Anxiety and enjoyment in the foreign language classroom. *Studies in Second Language Learning and Teaching*, 4(2), 237–274. <https://doi.org/10.14746/ssllt.2014.4.2.5>
- Dewaele, J.-M., Witney, J., Saito, K., & Dewaele, L. (2018). Foreign language enjoyment and anxiety: The effect of teacher and learner variables. *Language Teaching Research*, 22(6), 676–697. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362168817692161>
- Dornyei, Z., & Al-Hoorie, A. H. (2017). The motivational foundation of learning languages other than global English: Theoretical issues and research directions. *The Modern Language Journal*, 101(3), 455–468. <https://doi.org/10.1111/modl.12408>
- Dornyei, Z., & Taguchi, T. (2010). *Questionnaires in second language research: Construction, administration, and processing* (2nd ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203864739>
- Fuster, C., & Bardel, C. (2024). Translanguaging in Sweden: A critical review from an international perspective. *System*, 121, Article 103241. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.system.2024.103241>
- Holm, S. (1979). A simple sequentially rejective multiple test procedure. *Scandinavian Journal of Statistics*, 6(2), 65–70.
- Khajavy, G. H., MacIntyre, P. D., & Barabadi, E. (2018). Role of the emotions and classroom environment in willingness to communicate: Applying doubly latent multilevel analysis in second language acquisition research. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 40(3), 605–624. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0272263117000304>
- MacIntyre, P. D., Clement, R., Dornyei, Z., & Noels, K. A. (1998). Conceptualizing willingness to communicate in a second language: A situational model of second language confidence and affiliation. *The Modern Language Journal*, 82(4), 545–562. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1540-4781.1998.tb05543.x>

- MacSwan, J. (2017). A multilingual perspective on translanguaging. *American Educational Research Journal*, 54(1), 167–201. <https://doi.org/10.3102/0002831216683935>
- McNeish, D. (2018). 'Thanks coefficient alpha, we'll take it from here'. *Psychological Methods*, 23(3), 412–433. <https://doi.org/10.1037/met0000144>
- Norton, B., & De Costa, P. I. (2018). Research tasks on identity in language learning and teaching. *Language Teaching*, 51(1), 90–112. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444817000325>
- Plonsky, L., & Oswald, F. L. (2014). How big is “big”? Interpreting effect sizes in L2 research. *Language Learning*, 64(4), 878–912. <https://doi.org/10.1111/lang.12079>
- Teimouri, Y., Goetze, J., & Plonsky, L. (2019). Second language anxiety and achievement: A meta-analysis. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 41(2), 363–387. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0272263118000311>
- Wei, L. (2018). Translanguaging as a practical theory of language. *Applied Linguistics*, 39(1), 9–30. <https://doi.org/10.1093/applin/amx039>