



College students' motivation and attitudes towards learning English as a global language: Perspectives from Indonesia and Malaysia

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Abstract

This paper outlines the results of a survey which was carried out to examine the differences and similarities in motivation and attitudes towards learning English as a global language among university students in Indonesia and Malaysia. A total number of 384 students participated in this study. The data were collected using self-administered questionnaire. Descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data. Multiple analyses using *t*-test statistical tool were conducted to compare data sets. The study yielded a couple of eye-opening facts. Firstly, while the strongest instrumental motivation in learning English among Indonesian college students was to prepare for international tests of English, for their Malaysian counterparts, the biggest motivation in learning English was just for leisure. Secondly, the attitude of Indonesian university students towards learning English as a world language was native speaker-oriented, whereas their Malaysian counterparts tended to favor the target culture. This implies that students in different parts of the globe may have different perspectives on the role of English as a world language. With regard to Indonesia and Malaysia, this condition is most likely to be attributed to the different status of English in the two countries.

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Introduction

Globalization is generating a one world society, where more and more people use English as a universal medium of communication. According to Warshauer

(2000), people on Earth would be a new society in which English is used by a lot of groups of non-native speakers and no longer associated with only the Americans and British. As these individuals use English for interaction and communication, they will speak interculturally to share things in their own culture (Byram, 2008).

Globalization affects many fields of life, mainly politics, communication, social science, education and technology (Obi-Okogbuo, 2015). When the world becomes increasingly globalized, those who can communicate across cultures and countries throughout

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the world will have access to things which were previously inaccessible, gain advantage, compete, evaluate in their own way and comprehend the mass of information that is spread around the world in various forms.

English has become the most widely-used language. According to Rao (2019), around 375,000,000 people on the planet converse in English as a mother-tongue, while among over twice as many, English serves as the second language. It has played an important role in education and employment sectors. In many parts of the world, English has become a compulsory school subject, and a good mastery of the language is considered economically advantageous, as at the present time, being able to understand English is a requirement for the bargaining power in various job positions (Jayanti & Norahmi, 2014; Smith in Atmojo & Nugroho, 2020).

About fifty years ago the notion of English as a true global language was merely a theoretical prediction, which was still diffuse and vague. However, realities have created it as a real-world language at the present time. People in every part of the world feel its urgent role in their life: for academic purposes, for business goals and for other purposes. English is spoken by people throughout the world as their first language, second language and foreign language. Indeed, English is now a world language (Rohmah, 2005). For the non-native speakers, there is an urgent need to learn English as a global language. They are motivated to learn English because it promises a better future. They are proud when they have been successful in learning it; however, they may be disappointed realizing that native speakers of English have taken advantage of them (Rohmah, 2005). Therefore, investigating students' motivational and attitudinal variables are considered crucial in this case to see, let us say, whether they possess the proper motivation and attitudes towards learning English in order to allow them to take part in the world economy. A numerous number of research studies have been carried out on motivation and attitudes in a foreign language learning context. However, only a few have been devoted to the effect of motivation and attitudes towards learning English as a global language.

Literature Review

Motivation and attitudes are regarded as two variables attracting the attention of many language researchers. A popular classic work by Gardner (1985) mentioned that motivation and attitudes constitute dominant variables in language learning. The variables influence the individual's

behavior in second language learning. Within his framework, he discussed two kinds of motivation, integrative and instrumental. The integrative motivation refers to learners' desire to communicate, or integrate with the members of the target language. The instrumental motivation refers to functional reasons for learning the language such as getting a better job, a higher salary or passing an examination.

In the context of language learning, motivation has been a very popular research variable. Mohammed (2015) stated that foreign language researchers have been aware for a long time that the issue of motivation has been recognized as important predictors of foreign-language performance. In 2008, Vaezi investigated a group of Iranian college students' integrative and instrumental motivations in their English as a foreign language learning. This study revealed that they had very high motivation and were more instrumentally motivated.

Similarly, attitude is a reputable variable as far as language learning is concerned. According to Getie (2020), most first and second language researchers who investigated students' attitude have come to a conclusion that the attitude of the learners is an integral part of learning and that it should be considered a crucial component of second or foreign language learning pedagogy. In 2007, Karahan conducted a research study on the attitude of Turkish learners of English. He found that the students had slightly positive attitudes. In line with this, Geddes (2016) investigated the motivation and attitudes of Korean university students related to English learning. It reported that Korean college students learning English had positive attitudes towards the language.

With regard to globalization, few studies on motivation and attitudes towards learning English have been conducted. In Japan, Yashima (2002) found that many learners had "international posture;" i.e., they envisioned themselves as prospective global community and viewed English as the instrument that will help them get into that group. Meanwhile, in 2004, Lamb investigated the impact of globalization on integrative motivation of children ages 11 and 12 in Indonesia when they are introduced to English in a formal setting at an urban primary school. He was eager to learn the "intergrativeness," that he believed to have altered a lot since globalization emerged. In 2006, Dörnyei, Csizér, and Németh were engaged in research on second language motivation which involved more than 13,000 young language learners in Hungary. Among five different target languages: English, German, French, Italian and Russian, the teenagers tended to position English to a pedestal as they thought it would give a pathway for future career success.

A survey study carried out by Mehrpour and Vojdani in 2012 sought to examine globalization and its influence on learners' motivation and attitudes towards English as a foreign language learning. It was found that technological, sociological, and scientific aspects amplified by the process of globalization have impacted on the motivation of students in Iran in learning English and have caused them to become instrumentally motivated.

In Malaysia, a study conducted by Muftah & Rafik-Galea (2013) among pre-university students indicated that they had a very high motivation towards learning English. Although the final findings seem to show that the pre-university students were instrumentally motivated ($M = 4.318$), their integrative motivation toward learning English was still high ($M = 4.067$). Another study by Kadir et al. (2020) revealed that the integrative and instrumental motivations of students from four universities were high. The integrative motivation of the students was found to be higher than their instrumental motivation. This shows that students had a positive attitude towards learning English. The four universities were University Tun Hussein Malaysia, University Science Malaysia, Islamic Science University of Malaysia and University Malaysia Pahang.

In Indonesia, a study to examine the correlation between students' motivation and literacy skills revealed that there were high positive correlations between the two (Agustrianti, Cahyono, & Laksmi 2016). This indicates that when the students had high motivation, they had better scores in their literacy skills. A study by Sengkey and Galag (2018) suggested that the level of student attitudes toward learning English in Indonesia was moderate ($M = 2.93$) and the level of their motivation in learning English was high ($M = 4.01$). Lastly, this study found that there was no significant correlation between students' attitude and their motivation in learning English ($p = .105$). Thus, it was concluded that the students' attitude towards learning English was neutral, and that they were highly motivated in learning English. It may also be assumed that other factors were significantly related to students' motivation in learning English.

Based on what has been discussed, six research questions were formulated. First, what is the Indonesian university students' motivation in learning English as a global language? Second, what is the Malaysian university students' motivation in learning English as a global language? Third, is there a significant difference in motivation in learning English between Indonesian university students and their Malaysian counterparts? Fourth, what is the Indonesian college students' attitude towards learning English as a global language? Fifth, what

is the Malaysian college students' attitude towards learning English as a global language? Sixth, is there a significant difference in attitudes towards learning English as a global language between Indonesian college students and their Malaysian counterparts? Therefore, overall, the present study aimed to examine the differences and similarities in motivation and attitudes towards learning English between Indonesian and Malaysian college students with respect to globalization. Findings of this study provide us with insights into adult EFL learners' motivation and attitudes in this regard. In addition, this study becomes particularly interesting from a perspective of status of English in two countries — while in Malaysia, English serves as a second language, in Indonesia, it is taught as a foreign language.

Methodology

Participants

This survey study involved 384 college students, with 333 from Universitas Muhammadiyah Purwokerto in Indonesia and 51 from Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia. The Indonesian sample was recruited from nine study programs (departments) in The Faculty of Teacher Training and Education while the Malaysian sample was drawn out of students in The Faculty of Social Science and Humanities, The Faculty of Law, and The Faculty of Health Sciences. Stratified random sampling and convenience sampling techniques were applied (Taherdoost, 2016).

Data Collection

The data were collected using questionnaire adapted from Mehrpour and Vojdani (2012); Geddes (2016). All 20 motivational items and 25 attitudinal items were administered on a 5-point Likert scale. Questionnaire blueprint was prepared to help achieve logical validity.

Reliability check was made by administering the instrument tryout, where the collected data were then analyzed using the split-half technique. The tryout, which was conducted with 32 participants, found that the correlation coefficient .89 was much bigger compared to the table- r -value (at $n = 30$ or 35 , $\alpha = .05$ or $.01$) meaning that the piloted instrument was regarded reliable and was, therefore, eligible to be used for data collection. First, Department Chairs were sent an e-mail in order to participate and recruit participants in their respective departments. The questionnaires were distributed online through Google Form software due to COVID-19 pandemic.

Data Analysis

The data gathered via Google Form were then processed on Excel spreadsheet. First, descriptive statistics were used to analyze data related to sample demographics. Average score of responses was created to evaluate either motivation or attitudes towards learning English. This analysis was repeated for each variable for each country. Further, the average score of responses was calculated to examine which indicators making up each variable were dominant in each country. *t*-test was used to examine whether there was a significant difference in college students' motivation and attitudes towards learning English in the two countries. Last, multiple analyses were conducted to compare average scores of each variable obtained from the two countries and average scores among indicators making up those variables.

Results

The Motivation of Indonesian University Students in Learning English as a World Language

Overall, the Indonesian college students who participated in this study had “high” motivation in learning English. From six indicators of instrumental motivation in learning English as a world language as listed in Table 1, responses provided by the Indonesian participants averaged 4.14. As can be seen in the table, those six indicators exhibit only slightly different values, with “learning English for achieving success in international English tests” as the largest value.

With regard to integrative motivation, the Indonesian college students' motivation in learning English as a world language fell to category “high” with an average score of 3.9 (in 5-point scale rating). Between two indicators covered within integrative motivation — native speaker orientation and target culture orientation — there is an equal level as shown in average scores (see Table 2).

The Motivation of Malaysian University Students in Learning English as a World Language

Similar to Indonesian college students, the Malaysian students who participated in this research had “high” motivation in learning English. From six indicators of instrumental motivation in learning English as world language as displayed in Table 3, all responses provided by the Malaysian participants averaged 4.21. As can be seen in the table, the responses to items within the six indicators relatively varied, with the highest average score of 4.78 being addressed to “learning English for enjoying entertainment” while the lowest, 3.69, “Learning English for doing business.”

Regarding integrative motivation, overall, Malaysian students' motivation towards learning English as a global language was ‘high’ with an average score of 3.85. However, they tended to favor the target culture rather than the native speakers of the language (see Table 4).

Motivation in Learning English as a Global Language between Indonesian Students and Malaysian Students: Are They Different?

Concerning the different status of English in the two countries, where in Indonesia English functions as a foreign language, while in Malaysia it serves as a second language, it was expected that the study would reveal an interesting fact as to whether this situation had an impact on learners' motivation. Data on both instrumental and integrative motivations from the two countries are presented in brief in Tables 5 and 6. A glance at them indicates they are different (Table 5). The biggest gap was on the indicator “learning English for enjoying entertainment,” with 0.63. In order to determine whether or not there was a significant difference between the two mean scores, a statistical test using inferential statistical tool, *t*-test, was conducted.

Table 2 The integrative motivation of Indonesian college students in learning English as a world language

| Aspects | Indicators | No. Items | Total | Average |
|-------------|----------------|-----------|---------|---------|
| Integrative | Native Speaker | 17, 19 | 1,329 | 3.99 |
| | Cultural | 18, 20 | 1,336.5 | 3.95 |

Table 1 The instrumental motivation of Indonesian college students in learning English as a world language

| Aspects | Indicators | No. Items | Total | Average |
|--------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|-------|---------|
| Instrumental | Technology Mastery | 1 | 1,386 | 4.16 |
| | Access to Information | 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 11, 12, 13 | 1,382 | 4.15 |
| | Global Communication | 3, 4, 14, 16 | 1,352 | 4.06 |
| | Entertainment | 10 | 1,381 | 4.15 |
| | Businesses | 9 | 1,334 | 4.01 |
| | Int'l English Tests | 15 | 1,446 | 4.34 |

Table 3 The instrumental motivation of Malaysian college students in learning English as a world language

| Aspects | Indicators | No. Items | Total | Average |
|--------------|-----------------------|---------------------------|-------|---------|
| Instrumental | Technology Mastery | 1 | 223 | 4.37 |
| | Access to Information | 2, 5, 6, 7, 8, 11, 12, 13 | 228 | 4.47 |
| | Global Communication | 3, 4, 14, 16 | 205.5 | 4.03 |
| | Entertainment | 10 | 244 | 4.78 |
| | Business | 9 | 188 | 3.69 |
| | Int'l English Tests | 15 | 202 | 3.96 |

Table 4 The integrative motivation of Malaysian college students in learning English as a global language

| Aspects | Indicators | No. Items | Total | Average |
|-------------|----------------|-----------|-------|---------|
| Integrative | Native Speaker | 17, 19 | 183 | 3.59 |
| | Cultural | 18, 20 | 209.5 | 4.11 |

Table 5 The instrumental motivation in learning English as a world language in two countries

| Indicators | Average | |
|-----------------------|-----------|----------|
| | Indonesia | Malaysia |
| Technology Mastery | 4,16 | 4,37 |
| Access to Information | 4,15 | 4,47 |
| Global Communication | 4,06 | 4,03 |
| Entertainment | 4,15 | 4,78 |
| Business | 4,01 | 3,69 |
| Int'l English Tests | 4,34 | 3,96 |

Table 6 Summary of the *t*-test statistical analysis

| M | | <i>t</i> -value | <i>t</i> -values from the <i>t</i> -table (Two-tailed) | |
|------|------|-----------------|--|----------------|
| M1 | M2 | | $\alpha = .05$ | $\alpha = .01$ |
| 4.15 | 4.78 | 0.98 | 1.96 | 2.58 |

Instrumental motivation in learning English for enjoying entertainment: Indonesian students versus Malaysian students

Table 6 presents a summary of the *t*-test statistical analysis result. As can be observed in the table, the *t*-value obtained from the *t*-test calculation is smaller than the *t*-values from the *t*-table at both .01 and .05 significance levels, which statistically means that the difference in average scores being compared was too small.

Furthermore, the result has shown that the two scores being compared was statistically not different. Since this statistical test was done to the largest gap of mean scores, further analysis to other pairs of data set should end similarly, with no significant difference, accordingly. To sum up, quantitatively, the instrumental motivation of college students in learning English for enjoying entertainment, in specific, and learning English as a global language, in general, was similar in two countries.

Integrative motivation in learning English as a world language: Indonesian students versus Malaysian students

As mentioned earlier, overall, the data showed that the integrative motivation of college students in Indonesia and Malaysia in learning English as a world language was high. For the case of Indonesia, the integrative orientation to the native speakers of English was higher.

On the contrary, as seen in Table 7, Malaysian students tended to be oriented to the target culture of the English language. Furthermore, concerning the average scores of integrative motivations between two groups being compared, as touched on earlier, no comparative statistical calculation should be done unless the gap of data sets being compared is larger than 0.63.

Indonesian Students' Attitudes towards Learning English as a Global Language

As shown in Table 8, it was revealed that, overall, Indonesian students' attitude towards learning English as a global language was positive, with an average score of 3.98. Out of 25 items, item number 7 was rated the highest by the participants, having an average reach for 4.6 as well as rated 5 by the majority of the participants (63%). This item dealt with attitude towards proper and fluent spoken English. Therefore, it shows that the most positive attitude the Indonesian college students had towards learning English was the one towards spoken English communication fluency.

Table 7 The integrative motivation in learning English as a world language in two countries

| Indicators | Average | |
|----------------|-----------|----------|
| | Indonesia | Malaysia |
| Native Speaker | 3,99 | 3,59 |
| Cultural | 3,95 | 4,11 |

Table 8 Students' attitude towards learning English as a global language in two countries

| Average | |
|-----------|----------|
| Indonesia | Malaysia |
| 3.98 | 3.99 |

Malaysian Students' Attitudes towards Learning English as a Global Language

The aforementioned table shows that, overall, Malaysian students' attitude towards learning English as a global language was categorized as 'high', with an average score of 3.99. In the Malaysian data, out of 25 items, item number 7 was rated the highest, having an average reach for 4.71 as well as rated 5 by most participants (76.5%). Again, this item dealt with attitude towards proper and fluent spoken English.

Attitudes towards Learning English as a Global Language between Indonesian Students and Malaysian Students: Are They Different?

To determine whether or not there was a significant difference in degree of attitudes towards learning English as a global language in the two countries, an inferential statistical analysis was done to the set of values displayed in Table 8. This value gap was, again, too small to be statistically tested for a significant difference. In short, there was no significant difference in degree of students' attitude towards learning English in the two countries. To sum up, despite the different status of English in Indonesia and Malaysia, overall, the level of students' attitude towards learning English as a world language nowadays was identical.

Discussion

When looking at the motivation of college students towards learning English as an impact of globalization and status of the language in the two countries and whether there was a difference in students' motivation and attitude towards learning the language, this study yielded some exciting findings.

First, in spite of the fact that, quantitatively, the students' instrumental motivation towards learning English in the two countries was both at level 'high' or strong and was statistically not different, the data showed the strongest instrumental motivation towards learning English for Indonesian college students was to prepare for international examinations of English, whereas the biggest instrumental motivation towards learning English for Malaysian counterparts was simply for leisure. There is nothing unusual about the information on the extent to which the students in the two countries were motivated to learn English as a global language, as previous studies across different countries with different status of English

have revealed similar results – high or very high. This idea also applies to attitudes of the college students in the two countries towards learning English.

Even though some studies have shown that college students were instrumentally motivated in learning English, the present study seems to provide a new insight into, at least, orientation towards learning English as a global language among college students in Indonesia and Malaysia. In Hungary, university students were instrumentally motivated in learning English for future career success. Compared to that study, the present study's finding is more specific. In Iran, college students' motivation towards learning English dealt with technology and science mastery, something different from the result of the present study.

Due to its official status as a second language in Malaysia, Malaysian students are well versed in English compared to the Indonesian students. This can explain why Malaysian college students seem to learn English just for leisure. Though there has been emphasis on Malay language, English is given recognition in the education policy and planning as the "second language" in Malaysia. It has to be taught effectively at schools so that Malaysians who have undergone the national education system are able to communicate in the language (Omar, 1981). Meanwhile, in the entire Archipelago of Indonesia, English serves as a foreign language. Due to lack of exposure and practice, people struggle to learn English for their future. What is mostly on their minds in preparing for future opportunities is to successfully pass internationally recognized English tests to meet the requirement in job markets. This often is the first hurdle for them to cope with. Their problems include poor skills, inadequate practice, and low motivation (Mahmud, 2014).

Studies with similar results have discussed learner motivation and or attitudes in the context of English as a foreign language learning. Anwar et al. (2020) revealed that, in the context of English as a foreign language, learners held that learning English would widen employment opportunities. However, the finding of that study by Anwar was not so specific as the present study as to which particular problems require immediate solution. Information on learners' orientation towards success in international English proficiency tests leads to an understanding of the right action that the students and related parties have to take for achieving the goal at best.

What else makes this study interesting is the fact that even in two countries with similar context, the students' instrumental motivation can be different. Poggensee (2016) studied the impact of globalization on motivation

in learning English as a second language in Senegal. She reported that the students were instrumentally oriented to be able to speak with people from other parts of the world where English is not their mother-tongue (in the present study this orientation is referred to as ‘for global communication’), unlike the learning orientation of students in Malaysia, where English serves as a second language.

Regarding integrative motivation in English learning, where Indonesian university students were more native speaker-oriented, whereas their Malaysian counterparts tended to favor the target culture, this can be linked to the fact that in Malaysia English has the role of a second language rather than a foreign language. Living within an English as second language situation, Malaysian students are introduced to English earlier and learn it relatively at ease. They now can proceed with “peripheral” aspects of the language, i.e., culture. The other side of the coin is that Indonesian students have to fight for English – a “new” language introduced by some elementary schools (for children ages 6–12 years old) or given later as a compulsory school subject. That is why some (but not many) self-directed learners find their way, let us say, through watching videos, listening to recording and foreign radios, hunting foreigners or other ways to create opportunities.

With respect to integrative motivation, result of the present study is in line with Anwar et al. (2020). In the work, Anwar asserted that the students relied their English learning orientation on the native speakerism issue. Thus, if the two types of learning orientation within integrative motivation are compared, then in Indonesia, the students showed preference for learning or using English to connect with the native speakers rather than for adapting to the target culture.

Indeed, a gap in the data on both instrumental and integrative motivations between the two countries was so small that it was more likely to result in no significant difference statistically. The small gap in the dataset was most probably attributed to the number of participants in the Malaysian sample, which was too small. If the sample from the Malaysian side is increased to a more proportional level, it is likely that the result will be different. This might be a limitation of this study. Future studies of similar type are encouraged to survey proportional number of volunteers from participating countries.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Some key points emerge from the recent research. Firstly, while the strongest instrumental motivation towards learning English for Indonesian students was to get prepared for international English tests, for their Malaysian counterparts, the biggest motivation to learn English was just for leisure. Secondly, the attitude of university students in Indonesia towards learning English was native speaker-oriented, whereas their Malaysian counterparts tended to favor the target culture. This implies that students in different parts of the world may have different perspectives on the role of English as a global language. In the context of Indonesia and Malaysia, this condition is most likely to be attributed to the different status of English in the two countries. Bearing this in mind, a more serious step should be taken by Indonesian higher educational institutions to help the students prepare for international English language proficiency tests for future job seeking and career advancement. For Malaysian universities, however, other approaches such as enhancing the English teaching and learning via edutainment is considered more appropriate in this case, for the students are well-versed in English, and they are motivated to learn it for leisure. However, overall, the participants appeared to have positive orientation towards learning the English language as a global language. As one of the measures in supporting the students in learning the English language would be the environmental support factors such as teacher, parent and peer support, teachers, parents and peers are implicated in providing a supportive environment so that the learner is guided through the learning process. In addition, with regard to the number of participants, further studies with proportional samples are warranted in order to reach a firm conclusion on the question of similarities and differences of motivation and attitudes towards learning English in different countries. Lastly, due to unavailability, it is recommended that more research with respect to today’s status and function of English as a world language be undertaken.

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Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest.

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