



Muslim Students' Attitudes and Motivations towards English Learning in Indonesia: Highlights on Cultural Teaching

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Introduction

The theory of giving more emphasis on affective rather than on the cognitive aspects of L2 learners has been discussed by many language experts. For example, the following researchers have focused their research on the importance of motivation in L2 learning (Carreira, 2011; Oroujlou & Vahedi, 2011; Lavasani, Mirhosseini, Hejazi, & Davoodi, 2011; Mahmoodi, Kalantari, & Ghaslani, 2014; Rifai, 2010; Zhou, 2012). In regards to this, Oroujlou and Vahedi (2011) and Carreira (2011) affirm that being an intelligent and skillful learner but one with low motivation did not show any significant progress in a learner's studies. Also, with regard to the importance of attitudes in learning, Kormos, Kiddle, and Csizer (2011) state that in the language learning motivation model attitudes have a strong influence on effort and persistence in L2 learning.

In students with an Islamic background, learning English has two dichotomies, positive and negative acceptance. For instance, students in Bangladesh, Saudi Arabia, and Jordan are found to recognize English as a vital tool in the globalization era, more importantly, to succeed in higher education, get a better job, secure social standing, and improve personal standing (Al Mamun, Rahman, Rahman, & Hossain, 2012; AlKaff, 2013; Tahaineh & Daana, 2013). Likewise, students at UMSKAL Malaysia have considered English learning positively due to the atmosphere surrounding the teaching and learning of the subject matter (Ahmed, 2015).

Meanwhile, in other contexts, English learning may challenge Muslim students' attitudes and motivations. Here are some examples of global attitudes of English learning in various Muslim contexts. In an Arab country like Libya, 180 students of science were found to have negative attitudes towards English learning due to their preference of Arabic (Abidin, Pour-Mohammadi, & Alzwari, 2012). Likewise, the resistance of learning English was also found in Asian contexts like Pakistan. Jabeen and Shah (2011) have revealed that 87% of Postgraduate students studying Economics had negative attitudes towards the teaching of the language of the target culture. Nonetheless, the study uncovered that the respondents show positive attitudes only on the learning of someone else's cultural beliefs and social organization, not on the exposure to cultural entities.

Furthermore, studies in an Asian country such as Malaysia have drawn similar conclusions. Ahmad, Abdullah, Ghani, and Faizal (2014) investigated three teachers' attitudes and motivations in learning

English of their students from religious school education. The results show a negative attitude of English, mainly because of their nationality and religion (Ahmad et al., 2014). Among the religious reasons, some Malaysian Muslims also believe that English is linked to Christianity and the colonialists and assumed that it could make them as an 'ape of the white man' (Omar, 1992, as cited in Mohd-Asraf, 2005). This nuance has linked to Malaysian's images of their country's history toward the English men—the colonials. Also, in its geography, East coast states and rural areas, and the position of the Arabic language were also contributors to students' negative attitudes and motivation.

However, from the previous research findings, there is still a limited number of studies that have focused on discussing students' attitudes and motivation in the Indonesian context, particularly on students majoring in Islamic Studies. Indonesia is a Muslim country, with Islamic affiliated universities. Thus, the research questions for this study are formulated as follows: (1) What are students of the Faculty of Islamic Studies attitudes towards English language learning? (2) What are students of the Faculty of Islamic Studies motivations towards English learning? The findings of this research will not only present the statistical data but also involve three students' elaboration of their responses. Thereupon, results will be analyzed using the 'clash of worldview' lens. The current study is targeted to overcome the gap between the target population's needs in English language learning and the existing syllabus. Therefore, according to the authors' knowledge, Islamic elements are an essential aspect to be included in the ELT syllabus in Muslim learners' classrooms, especially in the Indonesian setting; moreover, if it is not attributed, students' attitudes and motivations in learning English can be severely effected.

Method

This research used a mixed-methods research design. The preliminary study found that the students majoring in Islamic Studies had a low motivation in learning English. As a result, their scores seemed to be lower in comparison to students majoring in more mainstream majors such as the Faculty of Medicine, Psychology, Engineering, Politics, and Economy. Mainly, when the classroom discussion comes to the target language culture, the students show their resistance to talking about the cultural aspects of the English language. This phenomenon was later confirmed by questionnaire data distribution highlighting students' attitudes. The 102 respondents were all students at the Faculty of Islamic Studies at the University of Muhammadiyah Malang, Indonesia. A large scale questionnaire and a small scale interview were implemented in this study. The quantitative data were calculated using a simple statistical analysis in percentages and summarized with the calculation of mean scores. The results of the questionnaires were then further investigated and confirmed through a semi-structured interview. The qualitative data were transcribed and translated, classified, then are described in a narrative form.

Results

Respondents' Demographic Profile

The distribution of the respondents as per their major is presented in Figure 1.

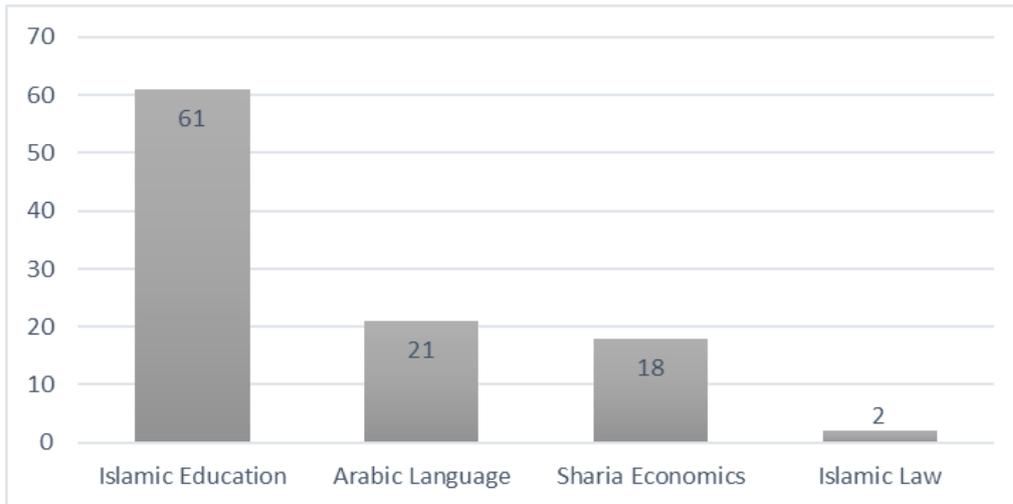


Figure 1. Respondents' demographic profile.

Students' Attitudes towards English Language Learning and Its Culture

The first section of the questionnaire verified the respondents' attitudes towards learning English and its culture. The table has highlighted that respondents were in a more positive standing towards Western culture in English learning, as around half of them agreed and a fifth strongly agreed that learning English together with its culture was important (Questions 1-3), as its mean score shows the highest point of agreement with 16.9%. In contrast, when such a belief was verified through question number 4, data showed the respondents considered that the cultural aspect was not the prominent factor to succeed in learning English, as 49% agreed, and 26.5% strongly agreed. This implies that the respondents were not clear about which culture belongs to either Western or other cultures, or even if such a division actually exists. The data is presented in Table 1:

TABLE 1

Respondents' Attitudes towards Learning English and Its Culture

No	Statements	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	I like to learn Western culture when learning English	4 4%	27 27%	49 49%	20 20%
2	Learning Western culture helps me to learn English better and faster	5 4.90%	28 27.50%	50 49%	19 18.60%
3	Learning English helps me to be more open minded	2 2%	25 24.50%	53 52%	22 21.60%
MEAN		1.2	8.9	16.9	6.8
4	I believe I can learn English without learning its culture	0 0%	25 24.50%	50 49%	27 26.50%

Students' Invested Attitudes towards Target Language Culture

The previous section's results were then validated through questions in the second section. Compared to the earlier results, the calculation in the second section showed a different distribution, and the trend was more negative. As regards cultural elements like listening to music and watching Western movies, respondents had positive positions. The highest mean score for this trend was 19.5% agree. Meanwhile, in cultural elements like food, fashion, and celebrations, a large percentage of the respondents had more negative perceptions. The mean score for these cultural aspects in Questions 7 to 11 show that 7.4 of

respondents strongly agreed.

All previously-mentioned attitudes were verified by the last statement about the real value difference between English (Western) and Islam, and strikingly there was 50.5% Agreement and 20.8% Strongly Agree. Thus, it can be derived from the data that the respondents explicitly were in total awareness of the existence of culture contradictions between Muslim culture and the target language culture. More detailed data is found in Table 2:

TABLE 2
Respondents' Invested Attitudes towards Target Language Culture

No	Statements	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
5	I enjoy listening to Western songs	13 12.70%	20 19.60%	36 35.30%	33 32.40%
6	I enjoy watching Western movies	11 10.80%	22 21.60%	42 41.20%	27 26.50%
MEAN		6	10.5	19.5	15
7	I enjoy eating Western food	22 21.60%	42 41.20%	32 31.40%	6 5.90%
8	I like to dress following Western fashion	52 51%	34 33.30%	15 13.70%	2 2%
9	I am happy celebrating birthday	44 43.10%	29 28.40%	26 25.50%	3 2.90%
10	I am happy to see my friends or family celebrating wedding anniversary	28 27.50%	36 35.30%	30 29.40%	8 7.80%
11	I am happy to celebrate new year with friends or family	39 38.20%	34 33.30%	22 21.60%	7 6.90%
MEAN		7.4	7	5	1.0
12	English (Western) values are different from Muslim values	8 7.90%	21 20.80%	51 50.50%	21 20.80%

Students' Motivation to Learn English

Being asked about their motivation towards English language learning, the data shows a clear trend that the respondents had a positive motivation towards English learning. Most of them strongly agreed on the topic as mean scores reached 12.6%. The data showed a startling discovery that even though there was a rejection of the teaching of the target language culture, learning English is considered as demanding for Muslim learners in the Indonesian context.

More comprehensive results are found in Table 3:

Table 3
Respondents' Motivation towards English Learning

No	Statements	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
13	I want to be able to speak English with foreigners	0 0%	3 3%	36 35%	63 62%
14	Mastering English will help me succeed in my studies	2 2%	9 8.8%	40 39%	51 50%
15	Mastering English will give me a better opportunity for my future career	2 2%	4 3.9%	42 41%	54 52.9%
16	Mastering English will improve my social standing	6 6%	15 14.7%	48 47%	33 32.4%
MEAN		0.6	1.9	10.4	12.6

Students' Response to English and Its Culture

Individual semi-structured interviews were held with students to confirm their responses to the questionnaire data. The interview results are described in the next section.

Songs and Movies

Based on the questionnaire results, it was found that students were more comfortable learning English with their culture.

I prefer to learn English through a movie than traditional teaching. The main reason would be that movie has given me a clear context on how structures or expressions are applied in real communication. (DIR1-R3)

For me, knowing English culture helps me to learn the language. I enjoy listening to songs and watching movies, and here is how I know some new vocabularies and pronunciations. However, I know by heart that listening to Qur'an is a lot better than listening to a song, yet sometimes I need to listen to it just to get some fun and get rid of my study load. (DIR1-R2)

I do not want to be very much involved in the culture, like a song, for instance. As I do not thoroughly know all the meanings of the lyrics. So, listening to an English song can be dangerous for me, in particular, if it contains bad words. If song contains good lyric is still permissible, Zain Malik's song, for instance. Likewise, I do not like the idea of learning through song or movie mainly of religious belief. But, I recognize that English is still vital for *da'wah* as our *da'wah* subject not always the locals, she/he might be foreigners or someone coming from overseas. (DIR1-R1)

Fashion

No, no, no, to be like how Western people dressed, I think I am not into it as a Muslim, especially for Muslim women, we have our standard of dressing (DIR2-R1).

I agree in one point to dress resembling the Westerns, for example, to wear a suit in formal events I think it is good, but not the idea of how Western women dressed. (DIR2-R3)

Celebrations

I am a Muslim, so I do not want to be like the Western. Celebrating those celebrations has its consequence in religion, it resembles the disbeliever. Furthermore, celebrating a party like the new year has its own risk for us, Muslim—the issue of getting out in the night for woman, for instance. (DIR3-R1)

It is funny, I think, when I know my friends congratulate someone's birthday in Arabic, they just try to make the Western idea into more Islamic by saying '*Baarakallahu fii 'umrik*' I realize that such a convention does not exist in the religion. (DIR3-R2)

I do not mind with the celebration, birthday, for instance, but I do not really like with the euphoria like a party. Similarly, when it comes to a new year bliss, my friends and I do not go out until late, but we do it just in the usual way only up to 10 pm. We celebrate it by eating some food together and grilling corn. So, we do not celebrate the event precisely the same as the Westerns do. (DIR3-R3)

Students' Motivation

The following questions were designed to get responses about students' motivations to learn English. They asserted that English demand in this globalized era has made it essential to learn:

There are now many (Islamic) schools which require teacher candidates not only capable of Arabic language but also English. For this demand, I need to force myself to learn English. (DIR4-R1)

Many sectors require English as its standards, not only to get a better job, but also to get an

academic qualification. (DIR4-R2)

I believe in the idea that English is essential, just like Arabic language, I am studying at the moment. It is used widely by people in the world as a lingua franca. So, I want to be connected with more people and go international. (DIR4-R3)

The data derived from the questionnaire was later verified through an individual interview with three respondents who were selected using purposive random sampling concerning their responses in the previous questionnaire. The data present that Muslim students were all motivated to learn English but were hesitant to learn English (Western) cultures. This issue is vital to be addressed; otherwise, there will be resistance to learning English for students in the Muslim context. Thus, the findings indicate that the ELT syllabus and teaching materials in the Muslim milieu should be modified by including Islamic elements.

Discussion

The results show that at the beginning, there was a positive attitude from the respondents about the target language culture in English language learning. Interviewee 2 represented respondents with similar opinions. She expressed that learning the target language culture gives her ‘context’ on how structures and expressions are used in real communication. Thus, the movie she watches and the songs she listens to have helped her to understand more about vocabulary and pronunciation spoken in real English language settings.

Meanwhile, subsequently, when the questions were crosschecked with the statements in the second section of the questionnaire about respondents’ invested attitudes towards English culture, the responses showed a different trend. It can be inferred that respondents were not aware of which culture was attached to English (Western) at first. Later, when it came to the next set of questions, they were mindful of what was indeed connected to English and its culture. In addition, it was revealed that the respondents were more compliant to cultural elements like (Western) songs and movies; however, they were still reluctant to infuse English (Western) cultural elements such as food, fashion, and celebrations into their personal lives. For example, interviewee 1 explained that she was confused about rejecting the birthday surprise. It can be inferred that seemingly some elements of Western culture have been absorbed by many people as the modern way of living. Thus, the division of which cultures belong to western or non-western countries have now become unclear. This attitude better explains Jabeen and Shah’s (2012) study on Pakistani students where it was found that the students were more open to learning the target language culture with regard to beliefs and social organization, but not on other cultural elements.

With regard to the negative view towards the acceptance of the target language culture, this study has found that the respondents were attentive to the importance of learning English ultimately for their education and future careers, as more than half of the respondents acknowledge its importance. This tenet is also in line with the research findings stating that English is regarded as necessary by Muslim learners for the reasons of globalization, education, career, and social standing (Al Mamun et al., 2012; AlKaff, 2013; Tananieh & Daana, 2013).

In regards to the responses of students’ invested attitudes and their elaboration on personal reasons towards the target language culture, it can be highlighted that there is a resistance to what is called a clash of civilization, a term propagated by Huntington (2000)—an American political scientist. A student in this study, interviewee 1, seems to be forthright in delivering her view on culture because she rejected all the ‘pop culture’ raised in the questions, and she believed that English was only an instrumental tool. This has proven that she had tried to find the term *English for da’wah*. A similar case but with somewhat different notions was found in the results of the interview of interviewees 2 and 3. Even though the respondents still negotiate on which culture belongs to the West or Islam, they had difficulty absorbing someone else’s culture. It was found that interviewee 2 was able to auto critic within herself about the

nature of listening to music; while interviewee 3 had tried to adopt the cultural element of a new year's celebration by roasting corn. However, he did not celebrate the new year precisely the same as the western cultures commonly do.

Addressing these phenomena, the thought of why the concern about culture is crucial in the Muslim worldview is because English is seen as having an association with Judeo-Christian cultural values also Western civilization, and other images that people may perceive (Mohd-Asraf, 2005). Further, she affirms that "English is more than just a language; Islam is more than just a religion," also it is a language which serves missionary purposes (Pennycook & Coutand-Marin, 2003; Makoni & Pennycook, 2005), and so English has an association to British and American culture (Holliday, 2009).

Likewise, Canagarajah (as cited in Kiliçkaya (2007) argues strongly on critical pedagogy. He problematizes the use of materials which have different contexts from students' sociocultural aspects. Further, he asserts that the school curriculum designed for the periphery students tends to have ideological domination of the western world (the central). He then formulates a series of two dichotomies in language education, knowledge as value-free vs. knowledge as ideology. In such notions, it is what Muslim students have in their context, that knowledge is not value-free, but beyond that, it is an ideology. In another sense, for Muslims, the end product of seeking knowledge is the practice of that knowledge. If so, if the culture taught in ELT contradicts what Muslims believe, it is likely for them to discard the use of that language.

As far as religious matters are concerned, to make an objective direction, the critical pedagogy on ELT has also been a central concern in the Asian EFL context in Chinese and Korean education. The idea of modernization and internationalization in the educational field is alleged as an approach of Westernization in some ways (Qingyang, 2005). Kim's (2006) study on socio-political construct on the attitudes and motivations of Korean high school learners towards English has revealed that the students are found to have a negative view of American and English proficiency as a result of their sentiments on anti-America.

In this regard, Muslim students' needs in learning English must be responded to. The mismatch between syllabus and teaching material can affect their attitudes and motivations in learning English. Thus, to design teaching material that involves Islamic-friendly content can give farther options for Muslim learners as it has been discovered that the familiarity of the local context can improve students' language skills and motivation to improve their national pride, psychological, and territorial dimensions (Muslim, 2017).

Conclusion

This study has revealed that in general Muslim students being researched in this study are well motivated to learn English, while their attitudes towards the target language culture must be addressed. To sum up, this study has suggested that the educational policymakers of higher education include Islamic elements in ELT teaching materials and syllabus; hence, it will bring new nuance and can be a direction for the Muslim students to learn English. This study is not without its limitations as the quantitative data is limited to 102 respondents, whereas the qualitative interview data is from three informants. Further research can include a larger number of respondents, investigating different contexts and analyzing related issues using a different lens.

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