LANGUAGE ATTITUDE OF GENERATION Z: GENDER AND SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS ANALYSIS

Achyar Nur Sohid
achyarnursohid9696@gmail.com
English Education Department
Universitas PGRI Adi Buana Surabaya, Indonesia

Irfan Rifai*
irfan.rifai@unipasby.ac.id
Pascasarjana Universitas Pasundan
Universitas Pasundan Bandung, Indonesia

Corresponding author*

ABSTRACT

This study is aimed at exploring generation Z's attitudes towards the English language, which is specifically focused on gender and SES (Socio-Economic Status). The underlying reason for conducting this study is the heterogeneity of the results study about language attitude regarding gender and SES. Moreover, ample research on language attitudes was conducted within the framework of the quantitative paradigm. This study is geared towards a qualitative case study where interviews, observation, group interviews, and personal documents (artifacts) were used to uncover generation Z's attitude towards the English language. Sixteen students, three male and three female students, and five upper and five lower-class students participated in the study. Personal interviews were conducted concerning gender category; meanwhile, group interviews were utilized concerning SES category. Observation during the classroom learning was focused only on students' linguistic and paralinguistic, while personal documents were procured from students' WhatsApp status, Facebook, and Instagram stories. The collected data were then analyzed thematically. Further analysis showed that there was a link between students' attitudes and gender. Female students are inclined to have higher positive attitudes towards English than male students. Likewise, there was a relationship between students' attitude and SES that upper-class students tend to have higher positive attitudes towards the English language than that of their counterparts. There are three prominent factors which contribute to these different attitudes; previous experiences, linguistic aspects, and instrumental and integrative motivation. These findings shed light on our understanding that generation Z regardless of their gender and SES possess varying degrees of positive attitudes towards English language. These findings help inform teachers to acknowledge students' diverse attitudes towards English language, while at

the same time they also need to develop more pedagogical practices which can help improve the students' positive attitude, especially those from male and a lower-SES background.

Keywords: language attitude, generation Z, gender, and socioeconomic status (SES)

INTRODUCTION

Language attitude is considered one of the critical components of the success of language learning. Ahmed (2015) defines language attitude as associated with the learner's passion or feeling for language use, which can nurture or hinder the learning process. According to Zeinivan *et al.* (2015), language attitude is the internal stage that predisposes people to do what they want to do. Brown (2000) utilizes language attitude as the set of beliefs that the learner keeps. In this regard, the students who have a positive relationship of passion, internal stage, and set of beliefs towards the English language are more likely to succeed. This is due to the fact that language attitude is a catalyst to have successful language learning (Fasold, 1984:36). Moreover, it is also noted that a successful learner is a learner who comprehends positive attitudes towards the target language (Prodromou, 1992).

A number of studies were conducted to understand the language attitudes of the language learners and how their language attitudes are associated with gender and socioeconomic status (SES). In connection to gender, a study conducted by Ghazvini & Khajehpour (2011), utilizing a questionnaire involving 123 Iranian high school male and female students, finds that females have a more positive attitude toward learning the English language and are more inclined to bilingualism than males. Regarding the SES, a study by Dirtya and Concilianus (2018), which applies a questionnaire involving 256 participants in the lower, middle, and upper economic classes, finds that the learners who come from the upper class have higher positive language attitudes towards English than learners who came from a lower class. In a similar vein, Sicam & Lucas (2016) also revealed that female students have significantly higher positive attitudes towards English than males. They also showed that SES is also closely related to positive attitudes, arguing that higher economic status is closely related to positive English language orientation. However, Annie et al.(2018) indicated that there was no significant connection between Vietnamese SES who are studying abroad and their English language attitudes.

Having recognized that there have been heterogeneity results regarding the study of language attitude about gender and SES, there should be a further study that builds a better understanding of the relationship between language attitude and gender and SES. A more specific study on generation Z students' attitudes towards the English language in the Indonesian context is equally important. In addition, the research about language attitude is mostly framed within a quantitative paradigm, and relatively few studies of language attitude use a qualitative approach. To this end, a study that considers generation Z's attitude towards English that captures a qualitative paradigm is equally essential. This study aimed to explore Indonesian students of generation Z's attitude towards the English language, which explicitly emphasizes

gender and SES.

Based on the topic, the research aims to answer the following questions related to Indonesian Generation Z students' attitude to the English language:

1. What are the generation Z students' attitudes towards the English Language?
2. How do their gender and socioeconomic status form their attitudes?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This research adopts the concept of Starks & Paltridge's language attitude and language learning and Gardner & Lambert's Integrative and Instrumental Motivation and language learning.

The Nature of Language Attitude

Language attitude is generally considered the essence of learners' willingness or intention to master the target language. Starks & Paltridge (1994:218) explained that learning a language is closely related to the attitudes towards the languages. Crystal (1992, p. 215) adds that language attitudes are learners' emotions about their language or others' language.

Gardner (1985, p. 10) asserts that attitudes as components of motivation in language learning. He believes the motivation to learn a language is specified on basic predisposition and personality characteristics such as learner's attitude toward foreigners, motives in learning, and particularly in language. In a similar vein, Csizér & Dörnyei (2005) deduce attitude as the main factor in language learning regarding learning motivation. Brown (2000) says that second language learners can take advantage of positive attitudes, and negative attitudes may lead to decreased motivation. He adds that positive attitudes toward language learners can guide the development of integrative motivation, consequently accelerating second language progress. With this in mind, to establish effective language learning, a positive attitude is needed for the learner as self-encouragement.

Language Attitude and Gender

Over the years, males and females have different characteristics and perspectives, especially in linguistic use. According to Edlund *et al.* (2007) that males and females use distinct language styles depending on the circumstance. Ellis (1994) says that women generally do better in learning the language than men.

Various studies found a varied difference of gender per language attitude. One of the instances comes from Gürsoy & Sağlam (2013), which utilizes a questionnaire and involves 216 teacher trainees of Uludag University (161 females and 55 males) to discover that female trainees are more positive towards English than their male counterparts. In a similar vein, a study from Karahan (2007), which employs a questionnaire and involves 190 students in 2nd year of Primary School (94 females and 96 males), finds that female students have higher rates (positive attitude) towards the English language than male students. Last, Lucas & Sicam's (2016)

research utilizes a questionnaire and entails 473 Filipino students from randomly selected three secondary learning institutions (two public and one private) discovers that females have significantly higher positive attitudes towards English than males. Having recognized that all of the studies have an identical result, that females are more positive towards English than males, this further confirms that gender tends to affect people's characteristics and perspective indifference in everything, in the mainly linguistic field.

Language Attitude and Socio-economic Status

SES is considered a social standing or class of an individual or group, often measured as a combination of education, income, and occupation. This view is adopted from Parson *et al.* (2001), who sees the SES as differentiating between people's position in society in terms of family income, educational background, and occupational prestige. Meanwhile, Mueller & Parcel (1981) describes SES as an individual's or family's position in the community that owns the degree to which the individual or family has access to wealth and power. According to Deloitte Southeast Asia (2015), adopted from *Badan Pusat Statistik (BPS)*, the social classes are upper, middle, and lower.

Regarding language attitude, SES is rarely highlighted as a focus or variable (Lucas & Sicam, 2016). Nevertheless, several studies have discovered a more significant dissimilarity of SES with language attitude. One of the examples comes from Lucas & Sicam (2016), which uses a questionnaire that finds that SES is significantly related to positive attitudes towards the English language. In a similar vein, Gayton (2010) asserts that travel abroad is the foremost thing in determining the correlation between SES and attitude towards English. For instance, some kids cannot see the relevance between learning English and traveling because they have never gone abroad. Meanwhile, some kids who have traveled abroad several times see English as a valuable tool to take them overseas so that they are always motivated to learn English. However, Annie *et al.* (2018), show that no significant relationship between the Vietnamese students' attitudes toward the target language in accordance with SES when they study abroad. In this sense, extensive research has indicated that gender and SES can be associated with different language attitudes. However, the research which overtly stated a particular generation towards English language is also in need of exploration.

The Nature of Generation Z and Its Relation to Language Attitude

Recognizing the importance of language attitude on language learning success, generation Z should have a positive attitude towards English. Generation Z, which is the first suggested by Lim *et al*. (2018), refers to those who are born after 1995. Moreover, Sarah & Alyx (2015) identified that generation Z has identical characteristics; realistic, creative, and hyper-connected.

Ramar *et al.* (2016) demonstrate that generation Z is young, wild, curious, intolerant, and the most potent force on this earth capable of changing everything built today. Dill (2015) says that generation Z is the first actual global generation. She adds that high-tech is in their blood; they have grown up in an unstable and complex environment that specifies their perspective about

work, studying, and the world. Moreover, Tari (2011) compares generation Z and its predecessor, generation Y (1981-1995), and discovers that generation Z is not aware of the concept of effort. They are practical, rather intelligent than wise, they are not afraid of constant changes, and due to the internet, they possess much information, but just to a particular extent. To solve problems, they try to find the solutions on the internet.

Concerning generation Z attitudes towards English language, Sharbawi (2021) shows that generation Z Bruneians highly possess positive attitudes of English language. Surprisingly, the study reveals that Bruneians perceive that their English language is more proficient compared to their native language. Similarly, Mushtaq *et al.* (2020) demonstrate that generation Z students in Pakistan prefer to read sources in the English language. These two studies can be a parameter to indicate that the majority of generation Z have positive attitudes towards the English language. This positive attitude might be due to the fact that the English language is increasingly popular among generation Z so that they are more motivated to learn the English language.

Integrative and Instrumental Motivation in Student's Language Attitude towards the English Language

In terms of types of motivation, Gardner & Lambert (1972) classify motivation into two types: instrumental and integrative motivation. Gardner & Lambert (1972) consider it instrumental in getting social and economic rewards through mastering the target language. Learners learn another language to obtain pragmatic gains instead of social implications with the target language community (Gardner, 2010). Saville (2006) adds that these instrumental goals may increase the social status or self-image, better future or occupation, and business opportunities, continue study abroad or meet school requirements, read technical materials or translations, etcetera.

As defined by Brown (1994), integrative motivation is where learners are willing to socialize and communicate with the target language community and culture and become part of that society. They learn the second language because they wish to adopt or participate in the target language group (Saville, 2006). Masgoret & Gardner (2003) say that integratively motivated learners are more inclined to have favorable attitudes towards the target language because they are open to other language communities.
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RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The researchers employed a qualitative case study as the research design. In this regard, Cooper & Schindler (2014, p. 165) assert that a case study is a robust research methodology that combines individual and (sometimes) group interviews with record analysis and observation. According to Rowley (2002), case study research is also suitable for contemporary events in a similar vein. It typically uses evidence from different sources, such as documents, artifacts, interviews, and observation. Since my study utilized interviews, observation, group interviews,

and personal documents to collect the data, a case study was selected as the research design.

Data and Source Data

The data of the research was categorized into two types, primary data and secondary data. The primary data is a verbal interview that was transcribed verbatim obtained via interviews. Meanwhile, the secondary data were images captured via observation, oral interviews transcribed verbatim, acquired through group interviews, and printed social media procured from personal documents analysis.

The source data of this study were 16 students in the 2nd year of senior high school in Sidoarjo, Indonesia. Concerning SES, they were split into five students; each considered as lower and upper/lower-middle-income socioeconomic class. This categorization is based on the Central Bureau of Statistic Indonesia (BPS). The names of the participants are all anonymized. We used anonymized names to provide a-more nuanced research particularly in Indonesian context. The selected anonymized names as our understanding can be a reflection of a particular generation and socioeconomic status within the society in Indonesia. Sultan, for example, is the common name referring to the rich people. A more detailed profile of the research participants can be illustrated in the following table.

No	Name	Age	Category	Date of Interview or Group Interview	Sex	Family Income
1.	Bagus	16-17	Gender	22-Oct-19	M	-
2.	Naval	16-17	Gender	29-Oct-19	M	-
3.	Al-Faruq	16-17	Gender	29-Oct-19	M	-
4.	Indah	16-17	Gender	22-Oct-19	F	-
5.	Anggun	16-17	Gender	22-Oct-19	F	-
6.	Ayu	16-17	Gender	30-Oct-19	F	-
7.	Cantika	16-17	SES (MC)	15-Nov-19	F	IDR 5M – IDR 9M
8.	Sultan	16-17	SES (MC)	15-Nov-19	M	IDR 5M – IDR 8M
9.	Brigadir	16-17	SES (MC)	15-Nov-19	M	IDR 5M – IDR 7M
10.	Lionel	16-17	SES (MC)	15-Nov-19	M	IDR 6M – IDR 8M
11.	Berlina	16-17	SES (MC)	15-Nov-19	F	IDR 5M – IDR 6M
12.	Permata	16-17	SES (LC)	1-Nov-19	F	IDR 1M – IDR 2.5 M
13.	Intan	16-17	SES (LC)	1-Nov-19	F	IDR 500K – IDR 2M
14.	Joko	16-17	SES (LC)	1-Nov-19	M	IDR 1M – IDR 3M

| 15. | Al-Bukhori | 16-17 | SES (LC) | 1-Nov-19 | M | IDR 2M – IDR 3M |
| 16. | Gigih | 16-17 | SES (LC) | 1-Nov-19 | M | IDR 1M – IDR 2.5M |

Table 1. The Demographic of Research Subjects
MC = Middle Class   *LC = Lower Class*

Data Collection

There were four methods in collecting the data. They were presented and elaborated in the following:

Interviews

The researchers conducted interviews as the primary method to obtain the data. Burns in Kumar (2011) defines interview as a verbal interchange which is commonly conducted face to face or online in which the interviewer tries to elicit information, beliefs or opinions from another person. In this research, the interview was considered the primary technique to obtain the data from the students. Unstructured interviews were selected as types of interviews, which means that the researchers are still allowed to arrange the questions to be profitable.

Observation

The observation was utilized as a supporting method in collecting data in this research. Observation needs to be conducted as a secondary technique to make the data richer and more valid, as observation can be used to produce trustworthy results (Merriam & Tisdell: 2016). Hatch (2002) argues that through observation, the researchers may obtain sensitive information from being in the setting that informants may be reluctant to tell in interviews. In this regard, the students' characteristics might be able to be understood by observing them and analyzing more in-depth results. During the observation, linguistic and paralinguistic (binary opposition) analysis of the student was incredibly focused. The reason for selecting linguistic and paralinguistic analysis was data enrichment by observing students' mimics, gestures, and some particular utterances.

Group Interviews

The group interviews were utilized as one of the supporting methods to collect the data. In this study, group interviews were employed as a secondary technique with small group type. There were two group interviews with a mixture of gender participants. The group interview was conducted with ten students (five males and five females).

Personal Documents

Personal documents were used in addition to other methods of data collection; observation and group interviews. Personal documents are collected from the participants' social media, for instance, WhatsApp, Facebook, and Instagram.

Data Analysis

The data obtained from the interview was analyzed thematically regarding gender and SES from generation Z students. According to Braun & Clarke (2006, p. 79), thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analyzing, and reporting patterns (themes) within data. Braun & Clarke also add that thematic analysis minimally organizes and describes the data set in (rich) detail. They assert that a theme captures something important about the data about the research question and represents some *pattern* or meaning within the data set. Principally, there were three steps in analyzing the data namely familiarizing oneself with the data, generating initial codes, and searching for themes. To familiarize ourselves with the data, we transcribed the data verbatim,

meaning that we listened to the data many times before we were able to transcribe verbatim. Having been transcribed, we re-read the transcription to generate codes. We used manual coding as our preference or a personal motive. These codes were then clustered to search for themes. The most prominent themes were selected and presented in the research findings.

RESULTS

The Different Attitudes of Students towards the English Language
    The research findings show that there have been different attitudes of Generation Z, the 2nd year of Senior High School students, regarding gender (male & female students) and SES (middle & lower class students) to English language.

    1. Male and Female Students' Attitudes towards the English Language
    The research finding shows that male and female students performed different ways to improve their English language skills and different attitudes towards the English language. Males tend to use games, while females tend to utilize songs to increase their English language skills.

Bagus	*I sometimes learned English by games. I set the language to English in Mobile Legend. So, I can get the knowledge too. (Bagus, personal interview)*
Anggun	*I love listening to English songs, like You Are the Reason from Calum Scott. I also like listening to Korean songs but I prefer to listen to English. It is useful to enrich my vocabularies (Anggun, personal interview)*

Females are also inclined to create status on social media with English as a caption, as can be seen in the following image.

Image1. Whatsapp status

    Regarding students' attitudes towards the English language, females are more concerned with English than males. Strong evidence of positive attitudes was found when females tended to join English courses, which indicates that they are aware that English is necessary. They at least once have the willingness to make their English skills better by taking the course.

2. Middle and Lower Class Students' Attitudes towards the English Language

Further analysis showed that both middle and lower-class students expressed their opinions differently towards the English language. Middle-class students believed that English could be a beneficial secondary language in reaching their goals, such as being a doctor, navy, or policeman.

Brigadir	*I want to be a police officer, like my uncle. Same with Sultan, English is necessary for me to be an intellectual police in the future. (Brigadir, focus group discussion (middle class))*
Bernard	*Same (like Al-Bukhori). I like helping my brother to repair the motorcycle's machine in the house, probably I will take Mechanical Engineering as my major. I think it's fine if we don't master English too much. Somehow, as long as we have a will then we can do everything. (Bernard, focus group discussion (lower class))*

At the same time, lower-class students saw English only as an ordinary language that was unnecessary for their purposes. In accordance with students' attitudes towards the English language, middle-class students are more inclined to have more positive attitudes than lower-class students. Strong evidence was discovered when middle-class students tended to know more about educational terms overseas and wished to go abroad, which indicated that the students were aware that English is helpful.

Factors which Contribute to Students' Attitudes towards the English Language

The research findings show that at least three factors were identified to contribute to the students' attitude towards the English language: previous experience, linguistic aspects, and instrumental and integrative motivation of students.

1. Previous Experience Informs Student's Attitude towards the English Language

Experience is considered a factor in determining students' attitudes towards the English language, both students from gender and SES category. If a student had a negative experience concerning English, they would likely possess a negative attitude towards English and vice versa. For instance, Bagus from the gender category confidently said that he had an exciting experience in the past, which made him enthusiastic about learning English.

Bagus	*I started interested in learning English when I was in Elementary School, 6th grade if I'm not mistaken. That's all because of my teacher. One day my teacher had a question-and-answer quiz, and then I was able to answer it correctly, I was proud of myself at that time. (Bagus, personal interview)*

When Bagus found his teachers to be the source for his positive attitude, Intan from the SES category, for instance, had an experience that changed her attitude into positive only by watching a movie. She started loving the English language when her mother bought her a *Finding Nemo* movie disc. She said that English is unique and cool.

Intan   *I remember it well when my mother bought me a Finding Nemo movie disc when I was in 5th grade of Elementary School, if I'm not mistaken. So, because of that, I became interested in the English language due to its uniqueness and cool. (Intan, group interview (lower class))*

While Intan found English interesting after watching *Finding Nemo*, Al-Bukhari conversely said that his previous educational background affect his attitudes toward English language. He said that he did not see the positive aspect of prioritizing learning English language.

Al-Bukhori   *I do not have such an immense feeling towards English. The fact that I love Arabic more. Probably, because I went to Islamic Boarding School as my Elementary School, so I didn't think that English was an important language. I want to master Arabic first and then English. (Al-Bukhari, group interview (lower class))*

These findings support the previous study from Parichart & Channarong (2015), that experience in the past affects students' attitude significantly, which will cause students to either have a positive or negative attitude towards the English language. Moreover, experience plays a significant part in students' learning process, influencing their perseverance in mastering English.

2.   Linguistic Aspects Shape Student's Attitude towards English Language

In relation to gender, the present findings show that both male and female students were indifferent in learning English, finding that English linguistic aspects were difficult to understand. However, they have their own strategy to overcome their difficulty. Their selected strategy can be a predictor to show their attitudes towards the English language. The following strategies are utilized for example, Indah, a female student, and Naval, a male student.

Indah   *...because English has a lot of vocabulary, they make me confused. Sometimes, if I find unknown English vocabulary, I will make a sort of diary, like a note on my smartphone, then I will note them in it. After that, I translate them into Indonesian. (Indah, personal interview)*

While Indah overcomes her English vocabularies problem by noting them on her smartphone, Naval, a male student lacking in vocabulary, said explicitly that he eventually had no interest in English after trying to learn and practice it many times. More specifically, he said that vocabulary is immensely difficult, and as a result, he became too lazy to learn it. When he was asked about his experience learning English, he said that English is a really complex language.

Naval   *Difficult, its vocabularies are hard to understand; the first time I learned and knew English, it was really difficult. I am not interested anymore, even a single word in the English language. Actually, I want to be able to master English, but because it's difficult, I'm just too lazy to learn it. (Naval, personal interview)*

In accordance with the SES category, both middle and lower class students showed

relatively similar problems but with different solutions. Al-Bukhari, for instance, from the lower class, said undoubtedly that speaking is the most challenging aspect to be acquired. Even though his mother is an English teacher and has tried to engage in interaction with her using the English language, he is still unable to achieve his level of proficiency.

> Al-Bukhori   *The hardest one is speaking. Because, probably, I rarely practice, rarely speak English. I have practiced my speaking skill with my mother, but it is still difficult, I can't do that. (Al-Bukhari, group interview (lower class))*

While Al-Bukhari was desperate with his English language skill, Berlina, from the middle class, used Youtube to enrich her English vocabulary.

> Berlina   *Vocabularies. There are millions of them. I also often watch Youtube, there is the subtitle in it, so it is useful. (Berlina, group interview (middle class))*

3.   Instrumental & Integrative Motivation Construct Student's Attitude towards the English Language

Concerning gender, the data sets show that male and female students equally have the same motivation in learning the English language. They confidently asserted that learning English can contribute to achieving their goal easier. Naval, for instance, said that English could help him get a better job and find global experience in the future.

> Naval   *It's important actually (learning English). Because I want to be a navy like my father. I think it's necessary to have the capability (English) to become a peacekeeper in Lebanon. It's cool. (Naval, personal interview)*

This motivation is considered Instrumental Motivation, as explained by Gardner and Lambert (1972), that instrumental as a means to get social rewards by mastering the target language. Another example is Ayu, who said that mastering English can be a particular skill to actualize her dream of being a policewoman even though she did not show a positive attitude towards English.

> Ayu   *Yes. Because English is a special language... to be learned. When we master English, we will be considered cool and smart. Because I want to be police after graduation, English is necessary, in my opinion. (Ayu, personal interview)*

Because of her goal, Ayu still asserts that English is essential. She admitted that English could help achieve her dream, and it's categorized as instrumental motivation. She wanted to look cool from mastering English. This finding is highly related to Saville's (2006) statement that instrumental goals may increase social status or self-image.

Concerning SES, no particular distinction was found in either middle or lower-class students regarding their motivation to learn English. They all were students with instrumental motivation

with various dreams in the future. Cantika, for instance, said that English is essential to support her future goals to be a doctor. She asserted that she could comprehend many terms or medical types of equipment to be a professional doctor by mastering English.

> Cantika *... because if I can master the English language, everything seems easy (in becoming a doctor). Because there are also many terms or medical types of equipment that come from the English language. (Cantika, group interview (middle class))*

When Cantika saw English as a means of helping to realize her dream as a doctor easier, Gigih, for instance, said that mastering English can help him to be a sailor, as mastering English can be a value added when registering to be a sailor.

> Gigih *... If I can master English, then I will get a positive value to be a sailor. To be an intellectual person as well (Gigih, group interview (lower class))*

Since middle and lower class students' motivations are related to English to get social or career rewards, they are equally classified as instrumental learners. In conclusion, it can be drawn that both in the gender and SES category, all participants showed instrumental motivation in learning the English language. This finding aligns with Hong & Ganapathy's (2017) finding that Malaysian students are also more instrumentally motivated than integratively motivated in English language learning.

CONCLUSION

Conclusion

At least five findings can be drawn from this study, 1) Female students were more inclined to own higher positive attitudes towards the English language than male students. Meanwhile, 2) middle-class students tended to have higher positive attitudes towards the English language than lower-class students. Concerning the factors that construct students' attitudes, they are concluded in the following, 3) Experience can be a significant factor in shaping students' attitudes from gender and SES category towards English language. Then, 4) Regarding SES, difficulty in linguistics aspects of experience affects their attitudes, particularly in managing the difficulties, while in gender, there is no particular difference found. The last, 5) Students from the gender and SES category are instrumental English language learners.

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