

## The Islamic Religious Education Students' Attitudes Toward English Learning: A Case Study at State Islamic University

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### ABSTRACT

Becoming proficient in English requires more than just knowledge of vocabulary and grammar rules; it also requires a positive attitude toward language learning. This study aims to investigate the students' attitudes toward English learning. A quantitative approach was employed in this study, utilizing a data collection technique through a questionnaire survey. The data was analyzed using descriptive statistical analysis. The respondents of this study consisted of 75 students from three classes in the first semester of Islamic Education at State Islamic University Raden Fatah, who were taking the English Subject. In collecting the data, this study used Orwig's Language Learning Attitudes Questionnaire. The findings show that out of 75 students, 17 students (22.66%) slightly hold self-image; Twenty-nine students (38.66%) neither hold nor lack inhibition; Twenty-five students (33.33%) slightly lack risk-taking; Thirty-nine students (52%) neither hold nor lack ego permeability; Forty-two students (56%) slightly hold motivation; Forty-six students (61.33%) neither hold nor lack ambiguity. This study's findings demonstrate the vast diversity of psychological profiles that exist among students, encompassing attitudes toward inhibition, self-image, risk-taking, ego permeability, motivation, and tolerance of ambiguity. While the variances in slight to moderate endorsements or lack thereof reflect individual disparities in the students' psychological orientations, the prevalence of neutral attitudes suggests a degree of ambivalence or equilibrium in these psychological categories.

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### INTRODUCTION

In today's globalized world, English has become indispensable, offering people more opportunities for personal, professional, and academic growth. Proficiency in English is often required for success in both the classroom and the workplace, as English is widely used as the primary language of instruction and communication in educational institutions and the workplace. A strong command of English is advantageous to those who wish to pursue a variety of career opportunities that require competent communication in the global marketplace. Strong English language proficiency is essential in professional settings where effective communication is crucial. Individuals with strong English language proficiency have an advantage when navigating the

complexities of the global business environment, whether they are interacting with foreign clients, participating in multinational teams, or negotiating across cultural boundaries.

Good English proficiency opens doors to a multitude of resources and opportunities in the academic world since English is the primary language used for many educational conferences, research papers, and publications. Having a solid command of English is essential for those who want to remain at the forefront of their fields, as it facilitates access to cutting-edge research, collaboration with academics from diverse linguistic backgrounds, and participation in international academic discussions (Selvi, 2021). In conclusion, possessing a solid command of the English language transcends professional and academic boundaries. It is essential for anyone aspiring to succeed in the increasingly diverse and interconnected global economy (Kim et al., 2025). It puts people in a position to actively participate in the global exchange of innovations, ideas, and knowledge and opens doors to a wide range of career options. A study by Iqbal et al. (2019) demonstrates that nearly all their students recognize the importance of learning English and consider it a current demand.

However, becoming proficient in English requires more than just knowledge of vocabulary and grammar rules—it also requires a certain mindset regarding language learning. According to APA (2024), an attitude refers to a relatively long-lasting and broad assessment of an item, person, organization, problem, or idea on a scale from negative to positive. Attitudes provide concise assessments of the objects of interest and are often presumed to originate from particular convictions, feelings, and past actions related to those objects. Darabad (2013) claims that the behavioral component of attitude is concerned with how a person acts and responds in specific circumstances. In reality, proficient language learning enables students to better identify with the language's native speakers and adopt a range of behaviors typical of those who speak the target language. It aligns with Kinginger (2009), who stated that learning foreign languages is one area of education that is distinct from other forms of education. Students who are learning a foreign language must integrate something they do not initially know into their identity. Thus, students must have a positive attitude toward learning English. This finding is consistent with other research studies (Yuliani et al., 2023) that emphasize the influence of attitudes on learning the English language. According to them, it is crucial to comprehend how students feel about learning English to establish a supportive and productive environment for language instruction.

Studies on language attitudes examine how people respond to language exchanges and assess others based on the language they hear. Humans use language to share, express, explain, and describe their thoughts, feelings, and ideas (Lubis, 2015). Language is used to convey thoughts, feelings, and ideas. However, it also relates to pride and identity—the emotions of happiness, pride, and other feelings that are connected to a person's mindset. According to Gajalakshmi (2013), a person's beliefs about the results or characteristics of engaging in a behavior (behavioral beliefs), weighted by assessments of those results or characteristics, determine their attitude. A person will therefore have a positive attitude toward the behavior if they firmly believe that engaging in the behavior will lead to highly valued outcomes.

On the other hand, a person with a negative attitude is one who firmly believes that their behavior will have unfavorable consequences. Research on attitudes began in the 1950s, with studies focusing on individuals' attitudes toward specific languages, dialects, or styles (Rezaei et al., 2017). Recently, numerous studies have demonstrated that attitudes are a significant factor in determining how well students learn and their behavior in English language classes. For instance, a study at Ar-Raniry State Islamic University by Zulfikar et al. (2019) discovered that attitude, which encompasses students' sentiments, convictions, and behavioral tendencies, is one of the key elements of success in language acquisition. According to research findings by Hussain et al. (2011), language acquisition and attitude are closely related and have a mutual impact on one another. Since attitudes are believed to influence learning outcomes, a study published in Taylor & Francis Online highlights the importance of examining students' attitudes toward language acquisition (Getie, 2020). Inquiring directly and explicitly about language learners' attitudes can reveal a variety of things, including their motivation to study and prepare for language classes, their ability to concentrate and pay

attention in class, and their intentions to engage and have discussions with classmates and teachers (Hardianti et al., 2022). A person's attitude toward a language influences their ability to comprehend and teach it effectively (Ghosh, 2017).

In the context of Islamic higher education, students of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) represent a unique demographic characterized by their dual pursuit of religious knowledge and modern academic subjects (Hartono & Ruslan, 2025). Most IRE students come from environments where Arabic and native languages dominate both instructional and social contexts, with limited exposure to English outside classroom settings (Allaberganova, 2023). This limited exposure often results in reduced confidence and increased anxiety when engaging with English, particularly in speaking and listening activities. Many also come from rural or economically disadvantaged backgrounds where access to quality English instruction is limited (Ghufron et al., 2024). Furthermore, some IRE students perceive English as a Western cultural element, which may create internal conflicts between learning English and maintaining religious identity (Selim & Chowdury, 2025). Nevertheless, recent studies reveal that many IRE students view English as a tool for da'wah (Islamic propagation) and global communication, demonstrating that language learning and religious identity can coexist harmoniously.

Given these conditions, understanding students' attitudes toward learning English in Islamic Religious Education study programs is crucial. It provides insight into potential obstacles and opportunities for improving English learning experiences. Lecturers can find effective strategies to foster a supportive and enjoyable learning environment by recognizing these attitudes (Zahra et al., 2023). Therefore, this study aims to investigate the attitudes of first-semester Islamic Religious Education students at State Islamic University Raden Fatah toward learning English. The findings are expected to help lecturers and policymakers develop more effective approaches to enhance English proficiency among non-English education students, thereby preparing them to communicate effectively in both academic and professional settings.

Urgency of this research lies in the need to understand the attitudes of Islamic Religious Education (IRE) students toward learning English, especially considering their limited exposure to English outside the classroom, anxiety in communication, and potential conflicts between religious identity and learning a foreign language. This research is important because students' attitudes significantly influence their motivation, participation, and success in acquiring English skills, which are crucial in the increasingly globalized academic and professional environment.

The novelty of this study lies in its focus on IRE students as a unique population, where English learning is not only an academic endeavor but also interacts with religious identity and cultural values. This study employs a quantitative approach to examine six psychological aspects—self-image, inhibition, risk-taking, ego permeability, motivation, and ambiguity—which are rarely explored simultaneously in the context of non-English major students in Islamic higher education. Therefore, this research offers new insights into the psychological profiles of IRE students and their implications for designing more effective and contextually relevant English language teaching strategies.

## METHODS

This study employed a quantitative research design, utilizing a survey approach, to investigate students' attitudes toward learning English. The primary variable in this study was students' attitude toward learning English, which was measured through a questionnaire adapted from Orwig (1995). The study involved 75 first-semester students from the Islamic Religious Education Program at the State Islamic University of Raden Fatah. They were taking the English Subject when they were selected as the participants of this study. Data were collected through an online questionnaire distributed to facilitate accessibility and convenience for the participants. The questionnaire survey method was chosen because it is suitable for empirical research, allows data collection that is easily quantifiable, provides respondents with sufficient time to give accurate responses, and is both time- and cost-efficient (Ahmed, 2015; Regmi et al., 2017).

The data obtained from the questionnaire were analyzed by calculating the total scores of each response to identify the direction of students' attitudes. A positive total score indicated a favorable attitude toward learning English, while a negative total score indicated an unfavorable attitude. The results were then interpreted to determine the overall tendency of students' attitudes following the scoring guidelines by Orwig (1995).

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The descriptive results describe students' attitudes toward six affective aspects: self-image, inhibition, risk-taking, ego permeability, motivation, and ambiguity. The detailed distribution is presented in Table 1.

Table 1.

Distribution of Students' Attitudes					
Variable	Strongly Hold	Moderately Hold	Slightly Hold	Neutral	Slightly Lack
Self-Image	12 (16%)	15 (20%)	17 (22.66%)	13 (17.35%)	7 (9.33%)
Inhibition	2 (2.66%)	3 (4%)	9 (12%)	29 (38.66%)	16 (21.33%)
Risk-Taking	0 (0%)	1 (1.33%)	13 (17.33%)	29 (38.66%)	25 (33.33%)
Ego Permeability	1 (1.33%)	5 (6.66%)	11 (14.66%)	39 (52%)	14 (18.66%)
Motivation	3 (4%)	12 (16%)	42 (56%)	14 (18.66%)	3 (4%)
Ambiguity	1 (1.33%)	1 (1.33%)	14 (18.66%)	46 (61.33%)	13 (17.33%)

In terms of self-image, out of 75 students, 12 students (16%) firmly hold self-image, 15 students (20%) moderately hold self-image, and 17 students (22.66%) slightly hold self-image. Thirteen students (17.35%) are at the baseline value. Point "0" is a point of equilibrium or indifference. Their total points on self-image attitude fall within a neutral zone, and the questionnaire does not categorize them as holding or lacking the measured attitude of self-image. While seven students slightly lack self-image, nine students (12%) moderately lack self-image, and two students (2.66%) strongly lack self-image.

Regarding inhibition, only two students (2.66%) strongly hold inhibition, three students moderately hold inhibition, and nine students slightly hold inhibition. Twenty-nine students (38.66%) neither hold nor lack inhibition. Sixteen students (21.33%) slightly lack inhibition, 11 students (14.66%) moderately lack inhibition, and five students (6.66%) strongly lack inhibition. No student strongly holds risk-taking, only one student (1.33%) moderately holds risk-taking, and 13 students (17.33%) slightly hold risk-taking. Twenty-nine students (38.66%) neither hold nor lack risk-taking. Twenty-five students (33.33%) slightly lack risk-taking, seven students moderately lack risk-taking, and no student slightly lacks risk-taking.

Only one student (1.33%) strongly holds ego permeability, five students (6.66%) moderately hold ego permeability, and 11 students slightly hold ego permeability. Thirty-nine students (52%) neither hold nor lack ego permeability. Fourteen students (18.66%) slightly lack ego permeability, four students moderately lack ego permeability, and only one student strongly lacks ego permeability. In terms of motivation, only three students (4%) strongly hold motivation, 12 students (16%) moderately hold motivation, and 42 students (56%) slightly hold motivation. Fourteen students (18.66%) neither hold nor lack motivation. Only three students (4%) slightly lack motivation, one student moderately lacks motivation, and no student strongly lacks motivation. Regarding ambiguity, only one student (1.33%) strongly holds ambiguity, one student (1.33%) moderately holds ambiguity, and 14 students (18.66%) slightly hold ambiguity. Forty-six students (61.33%) neither hold nor lack ambiguity. Thirteen students (17.33%) slightly lack ambiguity, no student moderately lacks ambiguity, and no student strongly lacks ambiguity.

The findings of this research provide a comprehensive analysis of students' motivation, ambiguity, risk-taking, inhibition, ego permeability, and self-image at varying intensity levels. The information reveals a range of opinions regarding these psychological concepts, highlighting the diversity of perspectives among the students who were polled.

Regarding their perception of themselves, most students are in the moderate to modest range of possessing a positive self-image; very few have a negative or strong self-image. The majority, on the other hand, appear to occupy a neutral ground, reflecting a neutral or balanced attitude about their image. It shows that neither a positive nor a negative self-image may be highly associated with a sizable part of the students. This finding aligns with research by Pineda (2011), which shows that a sizable portion of students—roughly 73%—displayed a favorable attitude toward learning English as a general language.

This finding aligns with the results of other studies, indicating that most students' positive self-images in the context of learning English fall within the moderate to modest range. The following findings support this statement: according to a study by Kara (2009), students' interest in language acquisition is influenced by their attitudes toward learning the language, and those who have favorable attitudes toward learning English are more likely to develop a passion for it.

It was discovered that self-scheduling, ineffective teaching methods, and low participation all played significant roles in determining how students felt about learning English. Another study by Chalak & Kassaian (2010), as cited in Ahmed (2015), examined the motivational orientation and attitude toward learning English of 108 students majoring in English translation at Islamic Azad University, Iran. The results demonstrated that these EFL learners tended to acquire English for both intrinsic and instrumental purposes, and highly and positively involved learners displayed a positive attitude toward learning the language. In 2011, a study by Latifah et al. evaluated the effects of instrumental orientation, attitude, and anxiety on students' performance in English language courses at Open Universities Malaysia, involving 757 students nationwide. These findings demonstrated that students with positive attitudes and strong motivation for learning English had a high level of involvement in their English proficiency.

According to these results, the majority of students have a moderate to modest range of positive self-image when it comes to learning English. A variety of factors, including motivation, participation, and effective teaching methods, can influence their attitudes toward learning the language. Students' attitudes toward language acquisition are not at a high enough level. The fact that the respondents' self-image is only "average" indicates that they do not believe they are proficient language learners (Julhamid, 2019). On the contrary, findings by Sari et al. (2023) showed that students in this study who were not majoring in English generally had a bad attitude regarding their university-level English studies. They only displayed positive attitudes toward their motivation and self-image, whereas negative attitudes were associated with inhibition, risk-taking, ego permeability, and a preference for ambiguity. In terms of inhibition, a significant portion of students take a neutral position, neither significantly exhibiting nor lacking inhibition. Still, a sizable portion of students exhibit mild to moderate lack of inhibition, suggesting that this group of students may be inclined toward cautious or reserved conduct.

The following are some of the causes of students' inhibition in learning English, according to the research findings:

- (1) Learning Environment: There is a strong correlation between speaking inhibition and the learning environment. A demanding educational setting, a lack of subject matter expertise, and the challenge of assignments can all lead to inhibition (Loan, 2021).
- (2) Fear and Embarrassment: Low self-perception, embarrassment, and fear of inadequacy can all contribute to students' inhibition. The pressure to perform well and the fear of making mistakes in front of classmates or teachers can be the root causes of this fear (Loan, 2021).
- (3) Lack of Self-Esteem and Confidence: Several factors, including shyness, low self-esteem, self-confidence, and lack of motivation, can cause inhibition when speaking in English. Students who lack confidence might be reluctant to use the language or take chances when speaking (Humaera, 2015).
- (4) Language Ego: A student's self-perception regarding the language, or language ego, can affect how well they speak. Pupils may be hindered by a desire to preserve their linguistic ego and avoid errors (Humaera, 2015).

(5) Evaluation and Testing: Language tests can also lead to inhibition. Students may feel pressure to perform well in testing situations due to the evaluation process and unfamiliar test tasks or formats, which can cause test anxiety (Humaera, 2015).

The results of the study on risk-taking show that students generally take a cautious approach and do not strongly support taking risks. The bulk of the students have a balanced level of motivation, neither firmly holding nor lacking it. Nonetheless, a notable proportion exhibits a marginally optimistic motivation attitude, typically within the cohort. It aligns with research demonstrating that students typically exercise caution and do not strongly advocate taking chances when learning English. According to Gömleksiz (2010), negative attitudes toward English language learning can hinder enthusiasm, confidence, and a positive outlook on learning. It suggests that students might be risk-averse and cautious in their pursuit of learning English.

According to the psychological concept of ego permeability, a significant percentage of students fall into the neither possess nor lack group, suggesting a nuanced understanding of their ego permeability. According to the data, most students either lack ego permeability or do not retain it firmly. According to Zahra et al. (2023), learners are more likely to have a positive attitude toward learning English and to become passionate about it if their language ego permeability is higher. Conversely, low permeability of the language ego can make learners feel negative about learning English, impeding their learning ability and reducing motivation (Zakarnah, 2018).

Finally, a significant majority of students fall into neither the hold nor the lack group when it comes to ambiguity as a psychological construct, demonstrating a balanced perspective on ambiguity. According to Christophe et al. (2018), exposure to environments that foster ambiguity may enhance participants' ability to free up the capacity to develop suitable reality-testing reflexes, thereby reducing the likelihood of unpleasant and unwanted misattributions.

## CONCLUSION

Out of 75 students, 17 students (22.66%) slightly hold self-image; Twenty-nine students (38.66%) neither hold nor lack inhibition; Twenty-five students (33.33%) slightly lack risk-taking; Thirty-nine students (52%) neither hold nor lack ego permeability; Forty-two students (56%) slightly hold motivation; Forty-six students (61.33%) neither hold nor lack ambiguity. This study's findings demonstrate the vast diversity of psychological profiles that exist among students, encompassing attitudes toward inhibition, self-image, risk-taking, ego permeability, motivation, and tolerance of ambiguity. While the variances in slight to moderate endorsements or lack thereof reflect individual disparities in the students' psychological orientations, the prevalence of neutral attitudes suggests a degree of ambivalence or equilibrium in these psychological categories. It is recommended that future research explore the underlying factors influencing these attitudes, such as classroom practices, teaching methods, or cultural influences, and consider longitudinal or experimental designs to examine how interventions may enhance students' positive attitudes toward learning English.

## LIMITATIONS

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the research employed a quantitative survey design relying solely on self-reported questionnaire data, which may not fully capture the depth and complexity of students' attitudes toward English learning. Second, the sample was limited to 75 first-semester students from a single study program at one university, which restricts the generalizability of the findings to broader populations of Islamic Religious Education students or other contexts. Third, the study used descriptive statistical analysis without exploring causal relationships or underlying factors influencing students' attitudes, such as teaching methods, socio-cultural background, or prior exposure to English. Additionally, the cross-sectional nature of the study provides only a snapshot of students' attitudes at one point in time, without examining how these attitudes may change over time. Therefore, the findings should be interpreted with caution, and future research is recommended to incorporate mixed methods, larger

and more diverse samples, and longitudinal designs to gain a more comprehensive understanding of students' attitudes toward English learning

### AUTHOR CONTRIBUTION

DW conceptualized and designed the study, supervised the research process, and contributed to writing and revising the manuscript. AG assisted in developing the research methodology, conducted data analysis, and contributed to drafting the manuscript. NL was responsible for data collection, organizing the dataset, and contributing to literature review and discussion. AG assisted in data interpretation, manuscript editing, and final proofreading. All authors have read and approved the final version of the manuscript.

### CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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