

## Islamic students' attitudes and perceptions toward learning English: a study from male-female students of STIT Madani Yogyakarta

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### KEYWORDS

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### ABSTRACT

The study aimed was to find out the male-female English foreign language (EFL) students' attitudes and perceptions toward learning English and female and male students' difficulties in learning English. The data was collected from 30 Islamic at the first student's semester at STITMA Yogyakarta. Data collecting techniques used in this research were through a set of close-ended questioners. The study used a qualitative and quantitative resign design. The research finding revealed that male and female Islamic education students have positive attitudes and perceptions to learn English although the male students had lower enthusiasm to gain their knowledge in learning English than female students. Both (male and female students) perceived learning English was important not only for their future life but also for spreading Islam around the world. The female and male students had similar obstacles in pronunciation and vocabulary mastery. Moreover, most female students thought that speaking skills were the most difficult skill, while most male students consider listening was the most difficult skill to learn.

Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui sikap dan persepsi siswa laki-laki-perempuan bahasa asing bahasa Inggris (EFL) terhadap pembelajaran bahasa Inggris dan kesulitan siswa perempuan dan laki-laki dalam belajar bahasa Inggris. Data dikumpulkan dari 30 mahasiswa Islam semester I di STITMA Yogyakarta. Teknik pengumpulan data yang digunakan dalam penelitian ini adalah melalui kuesioner tertutup. Penelitian ini menggunakan desain pengunduran diri secara kualitatif dan kuantitatif. Hasil penelitian mengungkapkan bahwa santri putra dan putri PAI memiliki sikap dan persepsi yang positif untuk belajar bahasa Inggris meskipun siswa laki-laki memiliki antusiasme yang lebih rendah untuk memperoleh pengetahuan mereka dalam belajar bahasa Inggris dibandingkan siswa perempuan. Keduanya (siswa laki-laki dan perempuan) menganggap belajar bahasa Inggris penting tidak hanya untuk kehidupan masa depan mereka tetapi juga untuk menyebarkan Islam ke seluruh dunia. Siswa perempuan dan laki-laki memiliki hambatan yang sama dalam pengucapan dan penguasaan kosakata. Selain itu, sebagian besar siswa perempuan menganggap bahwa keterampilan berbicara adalah keterampilan yang paling sulit, sedangkan sebagian besar siswa laki-laki menganggap mendengarkan adalah keterampilan yang paling sulit untuk dipelajari.

## Introduction

English's importance in today's global environment cannot be taken for granted since English is the greatest common language spoken universally. It lines with Wang (2008) cited in (Astika et al., n.d.) stated that English become increasingly important in the world. It is currently the primary language used on the World Wide Web, in the political and business areas. It has even become the language of today's pop culture. Therefore, almost all people agree that learning English is important. Wu (2010) proves that English as an international language is very important to learn in this globalization era. According to Nishanthi (2018: 872), English has become a required language for a wide range of professional and personal goals. So that way, students in many countries study English as an obligatory subject that they must be fulfilled since they are still learning in that college /university.

Islamic students should learn English to improve their knowledge of Islamic concepts in English terminology. They will have stronger abilities and a better understanding of English. Knowing students' attitudes and perceptions about learning English are other aspects of their English competency that will be investigated to help lecturers easier to re-design classes or activities in the classroom, as well as create an engaging environment. The learner's attitude and perception of the target language are two of the most significant factors affecting learning English. Students' motivation to study languages might be influenced by their perception of language skills and language learning (Csizér and Kormos 2009) via (Nishanthi, 2018).

Students' ability to master a second language is influenced not only by their mental abilities or language skills, but also by their attitudes and perceptions of the target language (Abidin, Majid, and Hanan, 2012). They also argued that the attitude concept could improve language learning by influencing the nature of students' behaviors and beliefs toward the other language, its culture, and community, and thus identifying their proclivity to learn that language. Language learners' motivation is frequently related to who and where the language learner is. The students' learning of the language will be influenced by their community and habits. Therefore, the student's ability in mastering a language is determined by their motivation which comes from their perception and attitude toward learning the language (Linguistik et al., n.d.: 2020).

Males and females use language in different ways even in their learning style. According to Brown (2002) cited in (Jiménez, 2018) says that different types of learners

arise because people differ and have different preferences and styles; as a result, individuals differ in how they learn, and which senses and parts of their brain are used in the process. Males and females must have different languages for expressing their thoughts, as well as different perceptions based on their minds. Perception is the process by which individuals organize and interpret their sensory impressions to give meaning to their surroundings. According to Robbins and Judge (2013:166), cited in (Fauziah et al., 2018), perception also includes how we respond to information. English is one of the compulsory subjects for all students at Madani Yogyakarta's Islamic high school. In general, they are unfamiliar with English courses. Most of them were from Pesantren, where no English classes were provided. STIT Madani Yogyakarta aspires to prepare and elevate students to be knowledgeable Muslims who are not only religious but also hold values as a core value in life. They are also modeled as articulate, self-assured individuals, valuable to the religion and the community, and the nation. Furthermore, it is aimed to produce students who can gain the knowledge of the society generally.

Perception is based on assumptions about the construction of reality. Everyone is believed to develop a restricted set of perceptions through his/her unique dealings with the environment to handle the unlimited variety of possible sensory images which she/he receives. In philosophy, psychology, and cognitive science, perception is the process of attaining awareness or understanding of sensory information (Qiong, 2017). According to G. Jaliyya & Idrus (2017), there is a strong positive correlation between students' perceptions of the importance of the English language and their attitude toward learning the language. When students recognize the importance of the English language, they are much more likely to be enthusiastic about learning it. The more aware people are of the importance of the English language, or the more satisfactory their perception of its importance, the more positive their attitude towards learning the language would be...(p.21).

The English language was designated as the international language for a variety of purposes, connecting people all over the world. As a result, skill in the English language is a great need, especially for academic students from Islamic education majors to survive in an environment where the language is a necessity in academic and job seeker after graduating from university, even English language would help a person to tell the world the knowledge of true religion. Furthermore, English is required to share the content of the Al-Qur'an and to spread Islamic knowledge through the written word. Meanwhile, to support the present

study, the writer will highlight some previous studies. The first previous study was carried out by Sarkol, Komar (2011) entitled "Student Perception of Learning English in Senior High Schools of Kaimana, West Papua". The second previous study was undertaken by Ali Alkaff, Amal et al., (2013) entitled "Students' Attitudes and Perceptions towards Learning English. The researcher concluded that there were not many studies that discussed EFL students' perception toward learning English in the previous studies, the researcher focused on male-female EFL students' attitudes and perception toward learning English.

This study will assist teachers in considering the significance of knowing their students' learning goals. In the learning process, there must be a connection between teachers and students. Knowing students' goals for learning a language will help them find motivation and will improve the affective factors in learning. It will also assist the teacher in creating a productive classroom environment. Furthermore, by understanding students' attitudes toward learning, the school can improve the quality of the teaching-learning process by providing more aids to assist teachers and students in achieving good learning outcomes (Jaliyya et al., 2017). The resources are crucial for assisting learners not only in learning but also in utilizing what they have learned in their daily lives. The researcher will investigate the following two issues: (1) What the perception and attitude are found of male and female Islamic education students in learning English, and (2) What the difficulties are found the Islamic education students toward learning English.

Most members of the language teaching profession recognize that when attitudes are positive and motivation is high, their students' learning potential increases. Although it is critical to recognize that many variables are involved because we are faced with complex social and psychological aspects of human behavior. Students' ability to learn a second language, for example, can be influenced by their attitudes toward the target language, target language speakers and their culture, the social value of learning the second language, and the student's attitudes toward themselves as members of their own culture (Ellis, 1994). Additionally, English as a Second Language (L2) teachers should recognize that all students have varying degrees of positive and negative attitudes and that the negative ones can be changed through thoughtful instructional methods such as using materials and activities that help students achieve an "understanding and appreciation of the foreign culture" (Brown, 2000, 181). The importance of learners' attitudes in improving second/foreign language learning cannot be overstated. According to Brown (2000: 160), "it is easy in second language learning to claim that a learner will be successful with the right motivation." Gardner (2006: 241) also says that "students with higher levels of motivation will perform

better than students with lower levels." "If one is motivated, he/she has reasons (motives) for engaging in the relevant activities, expends effort, persists in the activities, attends to the tasks, shows preference to achieve the goal, enjoys the activities, and so on," (Gardner, 2006: 243). In short, a person's learning outcome is greatly influenced by his or her attitude toward the subject, which will be impacted by both internal and external factors such as parents, grades, and public opinion. Both have an impact on motivating and enhancing students' attitudes toward learning. Perception is man's fundamental form of cognitive engagement with the world around him, (Efron: 969). Despaigne (2010) via (Ali et al., 2013) enhances the relationship between perceptions and attitudes, he says that perceptions are centered on the inner unconscious feelings from which students' attitudes toward language learning emerge. As a result, attitudes can be defined as the behavioral consequences of perceptions.

## **Methods**

This study was conducted at STIT Madani Yogyakarta of the first semester students of male and female Islamic Education. This research focused on male and female students' attitudes and perceptions toward learning English. There were thirty students from male and female first-semester students that were randomly selected from male and female students. This study used a close-ended questionnaire to collect the data. A four-point Likert scale questionnaire was developed for student participants. The students were asked to answer each item by choosing a number from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (strongly agree). The participants answered a question based on the research questions. Some of the statements were adapted from previous literature and the writer's additional questions based on the research needed. The questionnaire is divided into two parts. The first part consisted of 19 questions. The second part had six questions and open-ended questions in the form of a statement of the required completion. Moreover, the questions also allowed the students to choose one or more from a list of responses and allowed exploring their ideas about what could make them learn English better. The questionnaire was translated into Indonesia. It was aimed to ensure the optimal understanding of all students and to explore their full ideas. There were two types of collecting the data, namely quantitative and qualitative questions. The data for quantitative responses/statements were analyzed and tabulated then the percentages were calculated. While the data for qualitative responses which consisted of students' completion of statements were translated into English, listed, and then categorized into sections regarding the theme to which they related. This part used the qualitative

method because it was used to explore the students' opinions and suggestions to gain the student's English achievement. The questionnaire contained 16 statements with four options related to their perceptions toward learning English. This close-ended questionnaire was used to obtain data or information related to their perceptions toward learning English. The analysis of data for the questionnaire was divided into three themes as the following:

- a. Male-female of Islamic education Students' perceptions toward English lesson
- b. The Male-female of Islamic education Students' attitudes toward English lesson
- c. The Male-female of Islamic education Students' motivation toward English lesson

## Result and Discussion

The data from the close-ended questionnaire from the student participants were discussed based on its themes. The students' responses were important in this study because their perceptions also contributed to the English teaching and learning in their school.

### 1. Students' Perceptions Toward learning English.

The chart presented below shows the students' perceptions of English lessons. The chart shows the result from statements of the questionnaire items, which are:

**Table 1. The Important of Learning English**

No.	Statement		Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	I want to learn English	Male	8 (53,3%)	7 (46,7%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
		Female	12 (80%)	3 (20%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
2.	I only learn English because its courses are compulsory in STIT Madani Yogyakarta	Male	1 (6,6%)	5 (33,3%)	5 (33,3%)	4 (26,7%)
		Female	2 (13,3)	4 (26,7%)	5 (33,3%)	4 (26,7%)
3.	Learning English is important to my future	Male	8 (53,3%)	7 (46,7%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
		Female	9 (60%)	6 (40%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
4.	Learning English can help me find better job	Male	9 (60%)	7 (46,7%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

	opportunities		8	7	0	1
		Female	(53,3%)	(46,7%)	(0%)	(6,6%)
5.	Learning English is essential for my undergraduate and postgraduate studies.	male	8 (53,3%)	7(46,7%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
		female	10 (66,7%)	5 (33,3%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
6	I need English when I travel abroad	male	8 (53,3%)	7 (46,7%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
		female	14 (93,3%)	1 (6,6%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)
7	I need English to spread Islam around the worlds	Male	6 (40%)	7 (46,7%)	2 (13,3)	0 (0%)
		Female	10 (66,7%)	5 (33,3%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

From table 1, male and female students gave positive perceptions. It shows that both students, male and female students' attitudes and perceptions toward English lessons were high. The highest score of students' perceptions toward English lessons was shown in all statements number one to twelve. The students agreed that they have a big desire to learn English. They didn't think that they learned English because its courses were compulsory in STIT Madani Yogyakarta. They also agreed that English is important to the future, it will help them find better job opportunities. Moreover, they also agreed that learning English is essential for undergraduate and postgraduate students. English is helped to express the words in when we had travel to overseas. Surprisingly, female and male Islamic education students agreed that English will be helpful to spread Islam around the words. They realized that by mastering English well, Islamic knowledge will be easier to be understood by people around the world who learned Islam in deep. Students' perceptions toward English lessons were **in line with Wu's (2010) via (Astika et al., n.d.)**, he said that as an international language, English is very important for us to learn in this globalization era. This statement was related to the students' perceptions because, as shown in the score number of all statements above is high, they also indicated that English was very important which is in line with Wu's statement above.

**Table 2 . Students 'difficulties in learning English**

No.	Statement	Gender	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
8.	Learning English is difficult	Male	3 (20%)	7 (46,7%)	2 (13,3%)	2 (13,3%)
		Female	2 (13,3%)	6 (40%)	3 (20%)	3 (20%)
9.	Learning grammar and structure are difficult	Male	3 (20%)	9 (60%)	1 (6,6%)	1 (6,6%)
		Female	1 (6,6%)	10 (66,7%)	3 (20%)	0 (0%)
10.	Having little vocabularies mastery will influence someone's understanding and communication in English	Male	10 (66,7%)	5 (33,3%)	0	0 (0%)
		Female	6 (40%)	7 (46,7%)	2 (13,3%)	0 (0%)
11.	It's quite difficult to pronounce English well	Male	3 (20%)	9 (60%)	0 (0%)	2 (13,3%)
		Female	2 (13,3%)	9 (60%)	4 (26,7%)	3 (20%)

From table 2 above, most of them consider that learning English is difficult. 73,3% of female students and 80% of male students agree that learning grammar, structure, and pronounce are also difficult. Moreover, they realize that having a lot of vocabulary mastery will influence someone's understanding and communication in English. From the statement above, it can be concluded that they find difficulty grammar, structure, pronunciations, and lack of vocabulary.

**Table 3. Students' difficulties skills in learning English**

No.	Statement	Students	Scores
1	Writing	Male	2 (13,3%)
		Female	2 (13,3%)
2	Reading	Male	3

			<b>(20%)</b>
		Female	4
			<b>(33,3%)</b>
3	Speaking	Male	10
			<b>(66,7%)</b>
		Female	2
			<b>(13,3%)</b>
4	Listening	Male	4
			<b>(26,7%)</b>
		Female	12
			<b>(80 %)</b>

From table 3, the male and female students' perceptions toward learning English skills are quite different. 66,7 % of male students found it difficult in learning speaking skills while 80% of female students consider Listening as the most difficult skill in learning English.

### B. Students' attitudes toward learning English

**Table 4.**

No.	Statement	Gender	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
15	I consider I can improve my English	Male	8 <b>(80%)</b>	9 <b>(60%)</b>	0 <b>(0%)</b>	0 <b>(0%)</b>
		Female	6 <b>(40%)</b>	7 <b>(46,7%)</b>	1 <b>(6,6%)</b>	1 <b>(6,6%)</b>
16.	I have no time to improve my English	Male	9 <b>(26,7%)</b>	5 <b>(33,3%)</b>	1 <b>(6,6%)</b>	1 <b>(6,6%)</b>
		Female	7 <b>(46,7%)</b>	6 <b>(40%)</b>	1 <b>(26,7%)</b>	1 <b>(6,6%)</b>

The responses of students agreed that both students, male and female students believed that they have big desires to improve their English. Almost all the students agreed that they did not have time to improve their English. Surprisingly, the number of disagreeing between male and female students was similar.

### C. Students' Motivation toward learning English

**Table 5. Students' activities to improve their English mastery**

No	Statement	Gender	Scores
1	I read a simplified English book	Male	5 <b>(33,3%)</b>
		Female	9
2	I watch English programs	Male	10 <b>(66,7%)</b>
		Female	11
3	I review the new grammar point after having class	Male	1 <b>(6,6%)</b>
		Female	2 <b>(13,3%)</b>
4	I like correcting pronunciations with my friends	Male	1 <b>(6,6%)</b>
		Female	2 <b>(13,3%)</b>
5	I like listening to Islamic religion speeches in English on the internet	Male	12 <b>(80%)</b>
		Female	13 <b>(86,7)</b>

As shown in Tables 5 and 6, when the participants were asked to choose the option(s) provided, most of the male and female students have a similar choice to take listen to Islamic religion speech in English on the internet and then they take to watch English programs to improve their English. The third choice taken by both students (male and female students) was by reading simplified English books then followed by choosing to review the new grammar point after class and correcting pronunciations with their friends.

**Table 6. Students 'partners in learning English**

No.	Statement	Gender	Scores
1	With my roommate	Male	2 <b>(13,3%)</b>

		Female	13 (86,7)
2	My other university subjects	Male	0 (0%)
		Female	0 (0%)
3	My partners in my English class	Male	10 (66,7%)
		Female	3 (20%)
4	Other, specify	Male	0 (0%)
		Female	0 (0%)

Table 6 showed that the highest percentage of male students was registered in choosing their English partners in their English class to be the best partner in learning English while the lowest percentage of male students was registered in choosing their other university subject. Based on female students' responses, the highest percentage was registered in choosing their roommate and then they choose their partner in their English class.

**Table 7. Students 'frequency in using English**

No.	Statement	Gender	Scores
1	Along a day	Male	0 (0%)
		Female	6 (40%)
2	sometimes	Male	3 (20%)
		Female	9 (60%)
3	rarely	Male	12 (80%)
		Female	0 (0%)
4	never	Male	0 (0%)

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Female	0 (0%)
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The highest percentage of male students' responses of how often they used English outside the classroom were "rarely". It indicates that they lacked practicing English. The second percentage was "sometimes". Moreover, 0% "along a day" and "never" used English outside the classroom. The highest percentage of female students' responses of how often they used English outside the classroom was "sometimes". It indicates that they aren't constantly practicing English regularly. The second percentage was "along a day" that 40% used English. In addition, 0% "rarely" and "never" used English outside the classroom. From Table 7, it can be concluded that female students have higher motivation to learn English than male students. As stated by khairunnisa (2018) that there are some differences in academic performances between male and female students. The female students are higher in getting achievement than male students than the female student has more diligence, interest, and capability in learning. Female students are more interested in reading and literature learning.

#### 1. Students' Statements Activities If Their English Will Be Better.

Students' responses to the incomplete statement, "I think I can learn English better if .....", revolved around several inter-related factors that they viewed as vital to the success of the learning process.

##### a) Practicing English regularly

Most of the students believed that what could help them learn English better was more practice, highlighting the problem of the need of getting sufficient practice of the language. Keywords in their responses were "everyday life," "daily," "vocabulary" and "new words". They were convinced that their English would improve if they could practice English in their everyday life with others, especially those who spoke English well, and if they were trained in understanding people who spoke English, which in turn means that they need more listening practice. Vocabulary appears once more like one of the areas of high concern for the students. They emphasized their need to expand the range of their vocabulary, learn good pronunciation, and have sufficient drilling and practice on using the new words.

##### b) Having many vocabularies mastery

The students believed that mastering vocabulary is central and very important in language learning. It means that by mastering vocabulary, the learners will produce so many sentences either in spoken or written. They can also communicate with other people fluently and express their opinion or ideas conveniently. It is almost impossible to understand a written text without understanding vocabulary. Not being able to understand the vocabulary that is needed in the listening text is one of the most frustrating experiences for language learners. Oral is weakness, speaking practice is inconvenient to done and it can be difficult to speak a fluent sentence because of lack of useful vocabularies (Scott, 2002: 13).

c) Having good pronunciation and structure

Pronunciation is vital to proper communication because the incorrect use of pronunciation inevitably leads to the message being misunderstood by the recipient.

d) Watching English Program

There are so many English programs to improve the student's English skills. It can be news, movie, talks show, or other programs which uses English and those are will be better used or do not use English Subtitle.

e) Being confident to practice English

Feeling confident in Learning English is significantly needed by English foreign language students. If the learners feel shy to practice English, automatically their English skills are difficult to be increased. Being a mastery in learning English needs more practice and practice.

## Conclusion

Most male and female students are eager to learn English. All of them agree that English is important for their future. They also believe that learning English would help them find better jobs. They also believe that knowing the language would help them in their undergraduate and postgraduate studies. Furthermore, all male and female students agreed that traveling abroad would be easier unless they did so someday. Surprisingly, most Islamic education students believe that they would be able to spread Islam throughout the world where English is the most common language of communication. On the other hand, a minority of them (male and female students) felt that they learned English because it was a

compulsory subject in school, while nearly half of them disagreed that they learned English because it was a compulsory subject. It indicates that most of them realize that learning English was not only advantageous but also crucial.

In the third section, based on the students' responses, when they were asked to choose the options, most male and female students chose to listen to Islamic religion sermons in English on the internet and then watch English programs to improve their English. The third option chosen by both students (male and female) was to read simplified English books, followed by reviewing the new grammar point after class and correcting pronunciations with their roommate. Moreover, the highest percentage of male students chose their English partners in their English class to be the best partner in learning English, while the lowest percentage of male students chose their other university subjects. According to female students' responses, the highest percentage was measured in choosing their roommate, followed by their partner in their English class.

Most male students answered "rarely" when asked how often they used English outside of the classroom. It indicates that they did not practice English. The second percentage was "sometimes". Furthermore, 0 % of male students used English "along a day and "never" outside of the classroom. Many female students answered "sometimes" when asked how often they used English outside of the classroom. It was concluded that they are not constantly practicing English regularly. The second percentage was "along a day," with 40% using English. Furthermore, 0% said they "rarely" or "never" used English outside of the classroom. It can be concluded that even though the fact that most students did not have much time to learn English, some female students practice using English with their friends in their regular conversations more than male students. It proves that female students have higher motivation to improve their knowledge than male students. In line with (Mahmud & Nur, 2018), there are some academic performance differences between male and female students. He said that female students are higher in getting achievement than male students.

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