STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARD ENGLISH AND THEIR ACHIEVEMENT IN SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL: A CORRELATION STUDY

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Abstract

This study aims to analyze the relationship between students' attitudes toward English learning and their English achievement at the senior high school level. A quantitative correlational approach was employed, with a sample of 86 high school students in Jakarta selected via simple random sampling. Data were collected using a validated 20-item Likert-scale attitude questionnaire, measuring affective, cognitive, and conative components, and documentation of academic scores from semester report cards. Pearson correlation analysis revealed a significant positive relationship ($r = 0.724$, $p = 0.001$) between students' attitudes and their academic achievement. The findings suggest that positive attitudes, encompassing interest, motivation, and self-confidence, play a crucial role in enhancing English learning outcomes by potentially lowering the affective filter and increasing engagement. This study provides practical implications for pedagogical strategies, curriculum design, and school policy, emphasizing the need to foster positive affective domains in English language teaching to enhance learning quality in the Indonesian senior high school context.

Keywords: learning achievement, student attitudes

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To cite this article: Nurohmat, Rewindinar, & Dian. (2025). Students' attitudes toward English and their achievement in senior high school: A correlation study. *JEELL: Journal of English Education, Linguistics and Literature*, 13(1), 17-36. https://doi.org/10.32682/jeell.v13i1.124

Introduction

In the era of globalization and the digital revolution, English has solidified its position as the world's lingua franca, serving as a critical tool for accessing information, technology, international education, and the global job market. The mastery of English is no longer viewed merely as an academic requirement but as an essential competency for navigating an increasingly interconnected world. In Indonesia, English holds a prominent position in the national curriculum as a mandatory subject from junior to senior high school, with its mastery considered a key indicator of educational quality and a gateway to higher education and professional opportunities. However, despite decades of English instruction in Indonesian schools, achieving consistent proficiency among learners remains a persistent challenge that perplexes educators, policymakers, and researchers alike.

While factors such as curriculum design, teaching methodology, instructional materials, and classroom facilities are often examined in discussions about English learning outcomes, the psychological dimension of the learner—specifically, student attitude—represents a pivotal yet sometimes underexplored factor in this complex equation. The importance of affective variables in language learning has been increasingly recognized in contemporary educational research, yet their systematic investigation within specific Indonesian contexts remains limited. This gap becomes particularly significant when considering that Indonesia's diverse socio-cultural landscape creates unique affective environments that may distinctly influence how students perceive, engage with, and ultimately succeed in learning English as a foreign language.

The concept of attitude, a cornerstone construct in social psychology, refers to a learned predisposition to respond favorably or unfavorably toward an object, person, or idea (Eagly & Chaiken, 1993). In educational contexts, this multifaceted construct is typically understood through a tripartite model that encompasses three interconnected components: the affective dimension (encompassing feelings of enjoyment, anxiety, or emotional responses to the learning experience), the cognitive dimension (involving beliefs about the value, utility, and importance of the subject matter), and the conative dimension (representing behavioral tendencies such as engagement, participation, and willingness to invest effort in learning activities). This three-component model provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how students' internal dispositions toward English learning manifest across emotional, intellectual, and behavioral domains.

Within the specialized field of Second Language Acquisition (SLA), attitude is recognized as a fundamental individual difference variable that is intricately linked to motivation, another critical construct in language learning theory. Gardner's (1985) influential Socio-educational Model posits that attitudes toward the target language and its associated culture significantly influence learners' motivation levels and, consequently, their ultimate success in language acquisition. This theoretical framework suggests that students who hold positive attitudes toward English and the communities that use it are more likely to develop integrative or instrumental motivation, which, in turn, drives sustained engagement with learning activities and facilitates the internalization of linguistic knowledge. Furthermore, this theoretical perspective aligns closely with Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis, a seminal contribution to SLA theory that proposes that positive attitudes lower a metaphorical psychological barrier—the affective filter—that can impede language acquisition. According to this hypothesis, when learners experience negative emotions such as high anxiety, low self-confidence, or weak motivation, this affective filter rises, blocking the conversion of comprehensible input into acquired knowledge. Conversely, positive attitudes characterized by confidence, low anxiety, and strong motivation lower this filter, allowing language input to be more effectively processed and acquired by the learner's language acquisition device.

In the specific context of Indonesian EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learning, students' attitudes are shaped by a unique and complex mix of perceptions, cultural factors, and educational realities. Research indicates that English is widely perceived by Indonesian students as essential for future academic advancement and professional prospects, particularly for those aspiring to pursue higher education or careers in fields requiring international communication (Sugirin & Sudartini, 2011). This instrumental orientation toward English learning reflects a cognitive recognition of the language's practical value in an increasingly globalized economy. However, this positive cognitive appraisal coexists with significant affective challenges. Studies have documented that Indonesian EFL learners frequently experience considerable classroom anxiety, fear of negative evaluation from teachers and peers, and feelings of inadequacy when attempting to use English, particularly in oral communication contexts (Wahyuni, 2018). This duality—the simultaneous recognition of English's importance and anxiety in learning it—creates a complex, sometimes contradictory affective landscape that characterizes the Indonesian EFL learning environment.

Previous research, both at the international and national levels, has sought to illuminate the relationship between attitudinal variables and language-learning success. Preliminary and localized studies conducted in Indonesian contexts (e.g., Cahyono, 2015; Muflikha, 2020) have suggested a positive link between motivational attitudes and English achievement, providing initial evidence that affective factors matter for learning outcomes. However, these studies often suffer from methodological limitations, such as small sample sizes, the lack of validated instruments, or a focus on limited geographical areas. More importantly, a focused, systematic investigation into the strength and nature of this relationship, specifically at the senior high school level—where academic pressure intensifies, future career considerations become more salient, and students' cognitive and emotional development reaches greater maturity—remains necessary to provide concrete, localized, and actionable evidence that can guide pedagogical interventions and policy decisions.

The senior high school context presents a significant site for investigating attitude-achievement relationships because students at this level are at a critical juncture in their educational trajectories. They face high-stakes examinations, make crucial decisions about post-secondary education and career paths, and experience heightened awareness of the role that English proficiency may play in their future opportunities. Understanding how their attitudes toward English relate to their actual achievement can inform targeted interventions during this formative period, potentially influencing not only their immediate academic outcomes but also their longer-term educational and professional trajectories.

Given the critical role of English in contemporary Indonesian education and society, and recognizing the influential power of affective factors as theorized in major SLA frameworks, the core problem this study addresses is the need to empirically map and quantify the connection between the affective domain, as operationalized through the construct of attitude, and the cognitive outcome, as measured by academic achievement, in EFL learning within a specific Indonesian senior high school context. While educational intuition and general theory suggest a positive correlation between these variables, the specific magnitude of this relationship, its statistical significance within this population, and its practical implications for teaching and learning require rigorous empirical validation to move from assumption to evidence-based practice.

This study is designed to answer three fundamental research questions that systematically build upon one another. First, what is the profile of senior high school students' attitudes toward learning English,

examined across affective, cognitive, and conative dimensions? Second, what is the level of English learning achievement among the sampled senior high school students as measured by standardized academic performance indicators? Third, and most crucially, is there a statistically significant relationship between students' attitudes toward English learning and their English achievement, and if so, what is the strength and direction of this relationship?

Correspondingly, the objectives of this study are threefold: to describe and analyze the state of students' attitudes (encompassing affective, cognitive, and conative components) toward English learning through systematic measurement; to ascertain the level of students' English academic achievement based on standardized scores derived from their official academic records; and to examine both the existence and the strength of the correlation between the variables of attitude and achievement using appropriate statistical procedures.

The findings of this study are expected to yield both theoretical and practical benefits for multiple stakeholder groups. Theoretically, this research will contribute to the growing body of knowledge on affective factors in Second Language Acquisition by testing foundational theories such as Gardner's Socio-educational Model and Krashen's Affective Filter Hypothesis within the contemporary Indonesian socio-educational context. By providing empirical evidence from a specific cultural and institutional setting, the study can help to validate, refine, or contextualize these influential theories, potentially revealing how universal principles of language learning interact with local educational and cultural factors. Practically, the study provides actionable insights for multiple stakeholders in the educational ecosystem. For English teachers and educators, the findings can inform instructional strategies that actively build a favorable classroom climate, reduce debilitating anxiety, foster meaningful engagement, and cultivate the affective preconditions for successful learning. For school administrators and educational leaders, the results can support the development of school-wide programs such as English clubs, cultural immersion activities, or peer tutoring initiatives that cultivate positive attitudes toward English use beyond the confines of formal classroom instruction. For curriculum developers and policymakers, the evidence can advocate for a more holistic curricular approach that intentionally integrates affective learning objectives—such as building confidence, reducing anxiety, and fostering positive beliefs—alongside traditional cognitive objectives focused on linguistic knowledge and skills.

This study is scoped to investigate the correlation between two primary variables—attitude (measured via a self-report questionnaire) and achievement (measured via final-semester grades)—among Grade XI students at one public senior high school in Jakarta during the 2023/2024 academic year. The study acknowledges several important limitations that must be considered when interpreting its findings. Its correlational research design, while appropriate for examining relationships, cannot establish causality or determine whether positive attitudes lead to higher achievement, higher achievement fosters more positive attitudes, or both variables are influenced by third factors. The study's focus on a single school in an urban setting limits the generalizability of its findings to other contexts, particularly rural schools or institutions with different demographic compositions. Additionally, reliance on semester grades as the sole measure of English achievement may not capture all facets of communicative language proficiency, particularly productive skills such as speaking and writing, which may be assessed differently across classroom contexts.

Synthesizing the theoretical contributions of Gardner (1985) and Krashen (1982), this study operates on a coherent conceptual framework that can be articulated as follows: Positive Attitude (characterized by favorable affective responses and cognitive beliefs) leads to Lowered Affective Filter and Increased Learning Engagement (manifesting in conative and behavioral dimensions), which results in Enhanced Language Acquisition and Higher Academic Achievement (the ultimate cognitive outcome). This framework provides both the theoretical rationale for expecting a positive relationship between the variables and a potential explanatory mechanism for understanding how attitudes translate into achievement differences. Based on this framework and the reviewed literature, the study tests two competing hypotheses: the alternative hypothesis (Ha) states that there is a significant positive relationship between students' attitudes toward English learning and their English learning achievement. In contrast, the null hypothesis (H0) states that there is no significant relationship between these variables.

Research Methods

This study employs a quantitative correlational research design, which represents an appropriate methodological approach for the research questions under investigation. According to Creswell (2014), a correlational research design is particularly suitable for assessing the degree and direction of relationships between two or more variables through statistical analysis without manipulating them experimentally. This non-experimental approach

allows the researcher to examine naturally occurring relationships between variables as they exist in authentic educational settings, providing ecological validity that experimental designs may sacrifice. The correlational design enables the systematic description of the relationship between the independent variable, operationalized as students' attitudes toward English learning, and the dependent variable, operationalized as English learning achievement as measured by academic performance indicators. While this design does not permit causal inferences—a limitation acknowledged in the study's scope—it provides valuable information about the strength and direction of association between variables, which can inform both theoretical understanding and practical decision-making in educational contexts.

Population and Sample

The target population for this study comprised all 320 students enrolled in Grade XI at a public senior high school in Jakarta for the 2023/2024 academic year. Grade XI students were selected as the population of interest for several theoretically and practically important reasons. First, students at this grade level have accumulated substantial experience with English instruction, having studied the subject for at least five years in formal educational settings, thus providing a stable foundation for assessing their attitudes. Second, these students are approaching critical decision points regarding post-secondary education and career paths, making their attitudes toward English particularly salient and potentially consequential. Third, Grade XI students possess sufficient cognitive maturity and self-awareness to provide reliable self-reports about their attitudes, reducing potential measurement errors associated with younger respondents.

From this population of 320 students, a sample of 86 was drawn using Simple Random Sampling, ensuring that every member of the population had an equal probability of selection and minimizing selection bias. The sample size was determined using the Slovin formula with a 5% margin of error, a commonly accepted threshold in educational research that balances precision with practical feasibility. The formula, $n = N / (1 + Ne^2)$, where N represents population size and e represents the margin of error, yielded a minimum required sample size that the actual sample of 86 students exceeded, ensuring adequate statistical power. This sample size is also deemed appropriate for correlation analysis according to Cohen's (1988) statistical power tables, which indicate that a sample of this magnitude provides sufficient power to detect medium to large effect sizes with acceptable Type I and Type II error rates.

Instrument

Data were collected from two distinct but complementary sources, each addressing different aspects of the research questions. The first data source was an Attitude Questionnaire specifically developed for this study based on established theoretical frameworks. This self-report instrument was constructed following the tripartite model of attitudes, which conceptualizes attitudes as comprising affective, cognitive, and conative dimensions. The questionnaire consisted of 20 closed-ended items distributed across the three attitudinal components, designed to tap different facets of students' dispositions toward English learning. Each item was formatted using a 5-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree), providing sufficient granularity to capture variation in attitudinal intensity while avoiding the cognitive burden that might accompany scales with more response options.

Sample items included in the questionnaire exemplify how each attitudinal dimension was operationalized. The affective component was assessed through items such as "I feel happy during English lessons" and "I feel nervous when I have to speak English in class" (reverse-scored), which directly probe emotional responses to English learning experiences. The cognitive component was measured using items such as "I believe English is important for my future career" and "Learning English is a waste of time" (reverse-scored), which assess beliefs about the value and utility of English proficiency. The conative component was captured through items such as "I actively try to speak English when given the chance" and "I complete my English homework carefully and on time," which measure behavioral intentions and engagement tendencies.

To ensure the instrument's validity and reliability, rigorous development and testing procedures were implemented. The questionnaire underwent content validation by two experienced ELT (English Language Teaching) experts who independently reviewed each item for clarity, relevance, and alignment with the theoretical construct being measured. Based on expert feedback, several items were revised or eliminated to improve content validity. Following expert validation, the instrument was pilot-tested with a separate sample of 30 students who shared characteristics with the target population but were not included in the main study. Pilot test data were analyzed to calculate Cronbach's Alpha, a widely used reliability coefficient that assesses the internal consistency of scale items. The pilot testing yielded a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of 0.84, which exceeds the commonly accepted threshold of 0.70 for research instruments and indicates

that the questionnaire items demonstrate high internal consistency in measuring the underlying attitudinal construct.

The second data source consisted of English achievement scores obtained through a documentation study. Rather than administering a separate achievement test, which might introduce testing effects or fail to reflect students' sustained performance over time, this study used official final-semester report card scores for the English subject. These scores were collected from the school's academic office for each participant in the study, ensuring data authenticity and standardization. The semester grades, reported on a scale of 0-100, represent the cumulative result of multiple assessment activities throughout the semester, including formative assessments (quizzes, assignments, class participation), summative assessments (mid-term and final examinations), and potentially project-based evaluations. This comprehensive grading approach, while not capturing all dimensions of communicative competence, provides a standardized, ecologically valid measure of academic achievement that reflects students' overall performance, as evaluated by their classroom teachers, using consistent institutional criteria.

Data Collection

The data collection process was conducted systematically over two weeks in the final month of the semester to ensure that attitude measurements reflected students' accumulated experiences throughout the academic term and that achievement data represented complete semester performance. Prior to data collection, formal permission was obtained from the school administration, and informed consent was secured from all participants and their parents or guardians, following ethical research protocols. Students were assured of confidentiality and anonymity, with explanations that individual responses would not be shared with teachers or administrators and that participation would not affect their grades.

The attitude questionnaire was administered during regular class time under standardized conditions to ensure consistency across all respondents. The researcher personally supervised the administration, providing uniform instructions and remaining available to clarify any questions, while taking care not to influence responses. Students were given approximately 20 minutes to complete the questionnaire, a duration determined during pilot testing to be sufficient without causing fatigue. Completed questionnaires were collected immediately to prevent consultation or changes after the fact. Achievement data were obtained subsequently through official channels, with the academic office providing semester grades for all participants based

on their student identification numbers, which were later matched with questionnaire responses using a coding system that maintained participant anonymity.

Data Analysis

Data analysis was conducted using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) Statistics version 25, a widely used and robust statistical software package appropriate for the analytical procedures required in this study. The analysis proceeded through multiple systematic steps designed to examine the data and answer each research question thoroughly.

First, descriptive statistical analyses were conducted to characterize both the attitude and achievement variables. For each variable, measures of central tendency (mean, median, mode) were calculated to identify typical values. In contrast, measures of variability (standard deviation, range) were computed to assess the degree of dispersion in the data. Frequency distributions were generated to visualize score distributions and identify notable patterns, such as clustering, outliers, or skewness. These descriptive analyses directly address the first two research questions by providing comprehensive profiles of students' attitudes and achievement levels.

Second, prerequisite tests were performed to verify that the data met the assumptions necessary for the planned inferential statistical procedures. Specifically, a normality test was conducted using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, a statistical procedure appropriate for sample sizes between 50 and 2000 that assesses whether sample data are drawn from a normally distributed population. The normality assumption is crucial for parametric correlation analysis, as violations of this assumption can affect the validity of significance tests and confidence intervals. The Kolmogorov-Smirnov test compares the observed cumulative distribution function of the sample data against the cumulative distribution function of a normal distribution, with non-significant results ($p > 0.05$) indicating that the data do not significantly deviate from normality.

Third, the primary inferential statistical analysis was conducted using the Pearson Product-Moment Correlation coefficient, often denoted as Pearson's r. This parametric statistical test was selected because it is the most appropriate method for examining the strength and direction of linear relationships between two continuous variables when the assumptions of normality, linearity, and homoscedasticity are met. The Pearson correlation coefficient can range from -1.0 (perfect negative correlation) through 0 (no linear relationship) to +1.0 (perfect positive correlation), with the absolute value indicating the strength of the relationship and the sign indicating its

direction. For this study, the analysis computed the correlation between total attitude scores (sum of all questionnaire items) and English achievement scores (semester grades), testing whether these variables covary systematically.

The significance level for hypothesis testing was set at α = 0.05, a conventional threshold in educational research that balances the risks of Type I errors (false positives) and Type II errors (false negatives). A p-value less than 0.05 would lead to rejection of the null hypothesis and acceptance of the alternative hypothesis that a significant relationship exists. To interpret the magnitude of any significant correlation coefficient, this study adopted Cohen's (1988) widely accepted guidelines for effect sizes: r values of 0.10-0.29 are considered "small" effects, 0.30-0.49 are "medium" effects, and 0.50-1.0 are "large" effects. These benchmarks provide context for evaluating not just whether a relationship exists (statistical significance) but also whether it is practically meaningful (effect size).

Results and Discussion

The study involved 86 Grade XI students from a public senior high school in Jakarta who participated voluntarily after providing informed consent. The sample was relatively balanced in gender distribution, with 45 male students (52.3%) and 41 female students (47.7%) participating in the study. This near-equal gender representation enhances the sample's representativeness of the broader student population and allows for confidence that findings are not unduly influenced by gender imbalance. The age range of participants spanned from 15 to 17 years, with a mean age of 16.5 years (SD = 0.8), which is typical for Grade XI students in the Indonesian educational system. The relatively small standard deviation in age indicates that the sample was homogeneous in terms of developmental stage, reducing age as a potential confounding variable in the attitude-achievement relationship.

Results
Students' Attitudes Toward English Learning

Descriptive analysis of the attitude variable revealed important insights into the affective landscape of English learning among the sampled students. The overall mean score for the attitude variable was 3.85 (SD = 0.62) on the 1-5 Likert scale. To interpret this value meaningfully, a standard interpretation interval was applied: scores from 1.00 to 2.33 indicate Negative attitudes, scores from 2.34 to 3.66 indicate Neutral attitudes, and scores from 3.67 to 5.00 indicate Positive attitudes. Based on this classification scheme, the collective attitude of respondents falls clearly into

the Positive category, suggesting that as a group, these students hold favorable dispositions toward English learning. However, the standard deviation of 0.62 indicates meaningful individual variation, with some students holding significantly more positive or less positive attitudes than the group average.

Further disaggregated analysis of the three attitudinal subcomponents revealed interesting patterns that provide a more nuanced understanding of how students' attitudes are structured. The cognitive component, which assesses students' beliefs about the utility and value of English, scored highest with a mean of 4.10. This finding suggests strong intellectual recognition among students that English is important and valuable, likely reflecting widespread societal and educational messaging about English as a gateway to opportunities. The affective component, which captures emotional responses and feelings toward English learning, scored somewhat lower, with a mean of 3.70, indicating that, while students generally experience positive feelings, their emotional enjoyment and comfort with English learning are not quite as intense as their cognitive appreciation of its importance. The conative component, measuring behavioral intentions and engagement tendencies, had a mean of 3.75 and a standard deviation of 0.75, suggesting that students vary considerably in their actual behavioral engagement with English learning activities, even when they recognize its value and have generally positive feelings.

Students' English Learning Achievement

Analysis of the English achievement variable provided a complementary picture of students' actual performance in the subject. The English achievement scores, derived from official semester report cards, yielded a mean of 78.45 (SD = 8.23) on the school's 0-100 scale. According to the school's institutional grading system, which classifies scores as follows: A (85-100), B (70-84), C (60-69), D (50-59), and E (below 50), the average achievement level of 78.45 places students solidly in the "Good" category (B grade). This indicates that, on average, students in the sample are performing at a satisfactory to good level in English, though not reaching the "Excellent" threshold.

Examination of the distribution characteristics revealed additional important information. The distribution showed a slight negative skew, meaning that scores tended to cluster toward the higher end rather than be symmetrically distributed around the mean. This negative skew indicates a concentration of scores above the mean, with fewer students scoring substantially below average than substantially above it. The standard deviation of 8.23 points indicates moderate variability. While most students cluster around the B grade range, there is meaningful heterogeneity in achievement levels, with some performing at the A level and others at the C level.

Prerequisite Test: Normality

Before proceeding with the primary correlational analysis, the normality assumption was tested using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test for both variables. This preliminary analysis is crucial because parametric tests, such as Pearson's correlation, assume that the variables follow approximately normal distributions in the population from which the sample was drawn. The results of the normality testing were as follows: For the attitude variable, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test yielded a p-value of 0.120, which exceeds the significance threshold of 0.05 (p > 0.05), leading to non-rejection of the null hypothesis of normality and confirming that the attitude scores are normally distributed. For the achievement variable, the test produced a p-value of 0.089, which is greater than 0.05 (p > 0.05), and similarly confirms normal distribution. These results provide statistical justification for proceeding with the parametric Pearson correlation test, as the data meet the key distributional assumption underlying this inferential procedure.

Hypothesis Testing: Pearson Correlation Analysis

The core inferential analysis designed to directly answer the third research question regarding the relationship between attitude and achievement yielded highly significant results. Table 1 presents the complete statistical output from the Pearson correlation analysis.

Table 1. Pearson Correlation Analysis between Attitude and Achievement

Variable	N	Mean	SD	Correlation Coefficient (r)	p-value
Attitude	86	3.85	0.62	0.724**	0.001
Learning Achievement	86	78.45	8.23		

Note: ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)

The analysis produced a Pearson correlation coefficient (r) of 0.724, indicating a strong positive linear relationship between students' attitudes toward English learning and their English achievement scores. The associated p-value of 0.001 is substantially less than the predetermined significance level of 0.05, providing strong evidence against the null hypothesis. Based on these results, the null hypothesis (H0: There is no significant relationship between students' attitudes toward English learning and their English learning achievement) is decisively rejected in favor of the alternative hypothesis (Ha: There is a significant positive relationship between students' attitudes toward English learning and their English learning achievement).

According to Cohen's (1988) widely accepted guidelines for interpreting correlation coefficients, an r-value of 0.724 falls clearly into the "large" or "strong" effect size category (r ≥ 0.50). This indicates not only that the relationship is statistically significant (unlikely to have occurred by chance) but also that it is practically meaningful, with attitudes accounting for approximately 52% of the variance in achievement scores (r^2 = 0.524). In practical terms, this strong correlation suggests that students with more

positive attitudes toward English learning tend to achieve substantially higher grades in the subject. In contrast, those with less positive attitudes tend to achieve lower grades.

Discussion

The finding of a strong positive correlation ($r = 0.724$) between attitude and achievement aligns robustly with the theoretical framework proposed in this study. It aligns with findings from previous research in Second Language Acquisition. This substantial relationship suggests that in the specific context of this senior high school, variance in students' English grades can be meaningfully and substantially associated with variance in their attitudes toward the language and its learning. The strength of this correlation—stronger than many correlations reported in educational research—merits careful theoretical interpretation through multiple complementary explanatory lenses.

First, the finding can be explained through Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis, which provides a cognitive-affective mechanism for understanding how attitudes influence language acquisition. According to this theoretical framework, students with positive attitudes, characterized by high interest and low anxiety, maintain a lower affective filter. This metaphorical barrier can impede the conversion of comprehensible input into acquired linguistic knowledge. When students feel confident, comfortable, and positively disposed toward English, they are psychologically more open to receiving and processing language input. They are less defensive in class, more willing to listen attentively, more ready to take risks in attempting to produce language, and less afraid to make the mistakes that are an inevitable and necessary part of language learning. This lowered affective filter allows the language acquisition device to operate more efficiently, facilitating the unconscious internalization of linguistic patterns and structures that underlie true language acquisition as distinguished from mere conscious learning.

Second, the correlation can be understood through self-efficacy theory, as articulated by Bandura (1997), which emphasizes the role of beliefs about one's capabilities in determining behavior and performance. Positive attitudes, particularly cognitive beliefs about the language's utility and affective self-confidence, foster higher self-efficacy—the conviction that one can successfully perform the behaviors required to produce desired outcomes. Students who believe they can succeed in English learning, and who feel confident in their abilities, are more likely to set ambitious learning goals, engage actively in challenging tasks, expend greater cognitive effort in processing information, persist when facing difficulties or setbacks, and

interpret mistakes as opportunities for learning rather than as indicators of fixed inability. All of these self-efficacy-mediated behaviors directly impact both the quality and quantity of learning, creating a self-fulfilling cycle where positive attitudes lead to productive behaviors that result in improved performance, which in turn reinforces positive attitudes.

Third, the finding can be explained through an engagement mechanism captured in the conative dimension of attitudes. A positive attitude does not remain abstract or internal but manifests concretely in observable learning behaviors. Students with favorable attitudes toward English demonstrate higher levels of behavioral engagement: they participate more actively in class discussions, volunteer more frequently to answer questions or perform language tasks, complete assignments more carefully and thoroughly, seek out additional practice opportunities beyond required work, and attempt to use English in authentic communication contexts outside the classroom. This increased engagement provides more extensive practice with the language, creates more opportunities for meaningful interaction and feedback, and allows for the reinforcement and consolidation of linguistic knowledge. The cumulative effect of this sustained behavioral engagement over time is a measurable improvement in achievement.

Fourth, from a motivational perspective, integrating Gardner's (1985) and Dörnyei's (2005) frameworks, positive attitudes serve both as a component and a catalyst of motivation. Students who hold positive attitudes toward English are more likely to develop either integrative motivation (desire to learn the language to connect with its speakers and culture) or instrumental motivation (desire to learn for practical benefits like career advancement), or both. This motivated state energizes sustained effort, focuses attention on learning tasks, and promotes deep processing of information, leading to durable learning outcomes rather than superficial memorization that quickly fades.

An interesting and pedagogically significant nuance emerging from the descriptive data analysis is a differential pattern across attitudinal components: the slightly lower mean score for the affective component (M = 3.70) compared to the cognitive component (M = 4.10). This 0.40-point gap, though seemingly modest, represents a meaningful discrepancy that reveals an important characteristic of the attitudinal landscape: students intellectually recognize and endorse the importance of English (high cognitive score reflecting strong beliefs about utility), yet their actual emotional experience in learning the language (affective score reflecting feelings and comfort) is measurably less positive. In other words, there exists

an "affective-cognitive gap" where head knowledge and heart experience are somewhat misaligned.

This gap is theoretically significant and practically consequential for several reasons. From a motivational theory perspective, optimal engagement and deep learning occur when cognitive recognition of value is matched by positive emotional experiences that make the activity intrinsically rewarding. When students believe something is important but do not enjoy it, their motivation becomes purely extrinsic and compliance-based rather than intrinsic and engagement-based. This can result in surface-level engagement characterized by doing the minimum required to satisfy external demands rather than deep engagement driven by genuine interest. Over time, sustained effort driven solely by external pressure and utilitarian beliefs, without supporting positive emotions, is difficult to maintain and vulnerable to extinction when external pressure diminishes.

The affective-cognitive gap identified in this study likely reflects common features of the traditional Indonesian EFL classroom environment. Many classrooms remain relatively teacher-centered, emphasizing grammatical accuracy, reading comprehension, and examination preparation rather than communicative interaction, creative expression, and meaningful language use. Assessment practices often emphasize formal tests that generate anxiety rather than performance-based assessments that might be more engaging. The fear of making mistakes and being negatively evaluated by teachers or peers—a phenomenon well documented in research on foreign language anxiety (Horwitz et al., 1986)—can make English class feel psychologically unsafe, despite students' cognitive understanding that English is important.

This gap highlights a critical area for pedagogical intervention and suggests specific directions for instructional improvement. Teachers can work to bridge this affective-cognitive gap by deliberately designing learning experiences that are not only educationally sound but also emotionally positive and engaging. This might involve incorporating more interactive and communicative activities that emphasize meaning over form, using games, music, multimedia, and authentic materials that make English feel relevant and enjoyable, creating a classroom climate that explicitly values risk-taking and treats errors as natural stepping stones in the learning process rather than as failures, and implementing assessment practices that reduce anxiety while providing constructive feedback. By aligning students' emotional experiences with their intellectual beliefs about English's importance, teachers can unlock the full motivational power of positive attitudes to maximize learning effectiveness.

The findings of this study are consistent with the broader research literature on affective factors in language learning, both at the international level and within the Indonesian national context. The documented strong positive correlation between attitude and achievement echoes the international consensus that has emerged from decades of research in Second Language Acquisition. Foundational studies such as Gardner and Lambert's (1972) pioneering work on integrative and instrumental motivation, and more recent comprehensive treatments like Dörnyei's (2005) synthesis of motivation research, have consistently identified attitudinal and motivational variables as among the most powerful predictors of language learning success, often accounting for more variance in outcomes than traditional.

Within the Indonesian archipelago specifically, this study's findings reinforce and extend previous localized investigations. For instance, Cahyono's (2015) work on EFL teaching in Indonesia noted the important role of affective factors, while Muflikha's (2020) correlational study reported significant relationships between motivation and English achievement among high school students. The current study adds granularity and specificity to this emerging Indonesian evidence base by confirming that the relationship holds not just for the broad, somewhat diffuse construct of "motivation," but specifically for the tripartite construct of "attitude," with its affective, cognitive, and conative dimensions clearly delineated and separately measured. Moreover, the correlation coefficient of 0.724 reported in this study is notably higher than those reported in many previous studies, suggesting that in this particular population and context, attitudinal factors may be especially powerful predictors of achievement.

This convergence of findings across diverse contexts, populations, and measurement approaches strengthens confidence in the robustness and generalizability of the attitude-achievement relationship. It suggests that while specific cultural, institutional, and individual factors indeed modulate how attitudes form and manifest, the fundamental psychological mechanisms linking positive attitudes to enhanced learning outcomes appear to operate across varied Second Language Acquisition contexts.

The strength and significance of the correlation documented in this study carry important implications that extend across theoretical, pedagogical, and policy domains. Theoretically, the findings provide empirical support for affective-cognitive models of language learning within a specific sociocultural context, validating the applicability of frameworks developed primarily in Western contexts to the Indonesian EFL setting. The strong correlation underscores that affective factors are not merely

peripheral niceties or supplementary concerns but are fundamentally central to academic success in English as a Foreign Language. This argues decisively against a purely cognitive-transmissive model of teaching that focuses exclusively on delivering linguistic information and expects learning to follow automatically. Instead, it makes a compelling case for what might be termed Affectively Informed Pedagogy—instructional approaches that deliberately integrate attention to students' emotional states, beliefs, and behavioral tendencies as core components of effective teaching rather than as optional extras.

Pedagogically, the findings suggest that efforts to improve English learning outcomes should adopt a more holistic approach that targets not only students' linguistic knowledge and skills but also their attitudes toward the language and its learning. This might involve systematic attention to creating positive classroom climates, employing teaching methods that reduce anxiety and build confidence, using materials and activities that students find intrinsically interesting and relevant, providing feedback that is supportive rather than merely evaluative, and creating opportunities for success experiences that build self-efficacy. Teacher education and professional development programs should explicitly address the affective dimensions of teaching, equipping teachers with knowledge and skills to build positive attitudes alongside the development of linguistic competence.

From a policy perspective, the findings support arguments for curricular and assessment reforms that recognize and value affective dimensions of learning. Current curricula and standardized testing regimes in many contexts, including Indonesia, remain heavily weighted toward cognitive objectives and skills assessment, with limited explicit attention to affective goals. The strong correlation documented in this study suggests that this imbalance may be counterproductive. Educational policies might usefully incorporate explicit affective learning objectives in curriculum documents, encourage assessment practices that measure and reward not only what students know but also their engagement and attitudes, and allocate resources to interventions specifically designed to foster positive affective environments for language learning.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study demonstrates that in the context of senior high school English learning in Indonesia, students' attitudes toward the language and its learning are not merely interesting psychological variables but powerful predictors of academic achievement. The strong correlation documented here—$r = 0.724$, accounting for over half the variance in

achievement—underscores the need for effective English teaching to systematically attend to the affective domain, creating conditions in which students not only understand that English is important but also feel confident and comfortable learning it and actively engage with learning opportunities. By fostering positive attitudes through thoughtful pedagogy, supportive climates, and relevant instruction, educators can potentially unlock substantial improvements in English learning outcomes, helping Indonesian students develop the English proficiency that increasingly serves as a gateway to educational, professional, and personal opportunities in our globalized world.

The study also acknowledges important limitations that should guide the interpretation of the findings and provide directions for future research. The correlational design establishes association but cannot definitively determine causation—while positive attitudes may lead to higher achievement, it is also possible that achievement success fosters more positive attitudes, or that both variables are influenced by unmeasured third factors such as teacher quality, family support, or prior language learning experiences. The single-school sample, while providing depth, limits generalizability to other institutions with different demographic compositions, resource levels, or geographical locations. The reliance on semester grades as the achievement measure, while ecologically valid and institutionally meaningful, may not fully capture communicative competence or productive skills that are more difficult to assess through traditional testing.

For future researchers, this study suggests multiple productive directions for extending our understanding of attitude-achievement relationships. Researchers should expand the scope and sophistication of research designs by conducting similar correlational studies across multiple schools in diverse regions—urban and rural, high-resource and low-resource, Java and outer islands—to improve generalizability and identify potential contextual moderators of the attitude-achievement relationship. Longitudinal designs that track the same students over time would be particularly valuable for establishing temporal precedence and beginning to disentangle causal directions. Mixed-methods approaches combining quantitative correlation analysis with qualitative interviews, observations, or case studies could provide a richer understanding of how attitudes form, change, and influence achievement. Future research should investigate potential mediating and moderating variables that may help explain the attitude-achievement relationship, such as learning strategies students employ, teacher personality characteristics and teaching styles, parental support and

home language use, access to technology and out-of-school English exposure, or classroom climate factors. Finally, intervention studies that develop and rigorously test the efficacy of specific pedagogical interventions explicitly designed to improve attitudes—such as project-based learning, digital storytelling, content-based instruction, or anxiety-reduction techniques—and measure their subsequent impact on both attitudes and achievement would provide valuable evidence for evidence-based practice.

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