

**Perceptions and Attitudes of Students in Teaching Islamic Studies
toward the English Language**
levianasari15@gmail.com

Hesti Leviana Sari¹

Muhammadafeefee Assalihee²

Abstract

The purpose of the study was to reveal the perceptions and attitudes of students in teaching Islamic studies toward the English language. The participants of this study were students of teaching Islamic studies in the third year. The instruments of the study were questionnaires and interview. The questionnaires were analyzed by using R programme, and the result of the study indicates the students of teaching Islamic studies have positive perceptions and attitudes toward the English language. Their positive perceptions and attitude include their present study, future life and career.

Keywords: Students' perception, attitudes, English language, Islamic Teaching

¹ M.Pd. (English Education). Lecturer, College of Islamic Studies, Prince of Songkla University, Pattani Campus

² Ph.D. (Development Education). Lecturer, College of Islamic Studies, Prince of Songkla University, Pattani Campus Email: muhammadafeefee.a@psu.ac.th

Perceptions and Attitudes of Students in Teaching Islamic Studies toward the English Language

1.Introduction

English has become a compulsory subject in Thailand for higher institutions. This is caused by the needs to become international people which is the one of its requirement is able to communicate in English as an international language. As demanded in the curriculum the students must be able to communicative competence in English. Supported by Kaewchawee (2013:3) the main objective of learning a foreign language is to promote Thais learners to be able to communicate in English effectively. Based on that fact the language educators, instructors, lecturers, and teachers are demanded to create students centered classroom model because the students need to develop their skill and ability in language to gain the objective and to raise the best self-esteem in language practicing.

Included in the College of Islamic Studies, English is an important subject to be taught and learned by the students. Remind that the future goal of Thai students are able to communicate by using international language in all social contexts as it is a powerful language in whole aspects of human life. All majors in the College of Islamic Studies has applied the English language as the compulsory subject included in Teaching Islamic Studies. One of the outcomes of this program is to create a professional Islamic teacher for the future. To reach that goal by applying the English

language as their subject will enhance their knowledge and communication skill.

Teaching Islamic studies is emphasized on Islamic educational then the graduates will be competent Islamic teachers. The good Islamic teachers in the future life are able to deliver, transfer, and discuss Islamic knowledge to the world. The exact language to do all is English, supported by Crystal (2003:3) English is considered as an international language not only nearly quarter of the world's population is already fluent or competent in English but also has a special status in almost every country in the world.

There are many advantages in learning and applying English in social life especially for Islamic teachers. Besides they can teach Islamic knowledge to foreigners or become people who competent in delivering the speech to the mass and they are able to learn more from books or any other sources are written in English as well. However, for Thai students who are enrolled in teaching Islamic studies to deal with English in their context is complicated. As Thailand is a non-native country, English is taught as a foreign language and the influence of their mother tongue affect their confidence and attitudes in learning and practicing English. However some of them have courage and confidence in dealing with it. This case is similar to China in accordance with Yu (2010) state that Chinese students have positive attitudes toward English language and

“Chinese English”. It means the manifest of positive perception and attitudes toward English are influenced by their mother tongue and accent so that they create their own Chinese English.

Moreover, besides that fact the students’ perceptions and attitudes will assist them to learn and practice English for their present and future life. Perception is related to the result of individual observation toward certain things or events that occur around them which will produce certain perceptions (Campbell, 1967 in Ahen). Then, perception is the general awareness of things, how that individual went through before the situation that accepted by their sensory receptors then they create their own result of thinking. Moreover, perception is a cognitive process which manifests to as a mental order tendency, and it can be considered as a process where each student constructs their own beliefs, values, and thoughts that highlight the perception of the students about the use of English (Gracia, Santiago, 2017). Perception is a complete process in an individual. It involves general and critical thinking toward something that might or might not have a significant influence on his/her life.

Despange (2010:57) in his research state the language teaching is a mix of the previously mentioned disciplines involves the perceptions that are focused on reflections, included the origin of the learners’ attitudes towards the language learning process. Especially in language learning perception

and attitudes have significant roles to guarantee the language using. The positive perception which is followed by positive attitudes can assist the students to acquire the target language although they are not immersed in the language program. The positive attitudes in learning English can create a meaningful input and output for the language learning process.

Furthermore, Despange (2010:58) add the attitudes toward English will depend on how they perceive the power relationships between the mother language and respective language, thus supported by Eshghinejad (2016; 1) attitudes is considered as an essential factor influencing language performance and attitude to language is a construct that explains linguistic behaviour in particular. Then the ability of students to master a second language is not only influenced by the mental competence or language skills but also on the students’ attitudes and perception toward the target language. It means perception and attitudes have a close relationship in a human life which influence one and another which perception is referred to a set of positive attitudes and ideas, meanwhile the attitudes refers to how to act and response it.

Regarding the relationship between perception and attitudes, this study revealed both perception and attitudes students’ of teaching Islamic Studies which they do not enrol in English learning and practicing.

2. Research Method

This study was a descriptive research. The target group of this study was students of teaching Islamic studies in the third year. The sampling was random sampling by choosing 21 students randomly. The instruments of this study was questionnaire by using Likert scale 1 (strongly disagree), 2 (agree), 3 (neutral), 4 (agree), 5 (strongly agree), there were 17 statements in the questionnaire which divided into two parts perception and attitudes and the questionnaires were written in English and there were five questions that had been interviewed to five participants.

Then the questionnaire was analysed by using R programme.

3. Results of the study

Finding and Discussion

The result of the descriptive analysis shows that the overall mean score of English language attitudes is 3.57 (SD= 0.612). This result reveals that the participants have positive attitudes toward English. Moreover, the mean score of perception is 3.65 (0.645), this shows the participants of teaching Islamic studies have positive perception toward English as well.

Group	Count	mean	sd
Attitude	7	3.57	0.612
Perception	10	3.65	0.645

Table 1. Preliminary analysis; summary

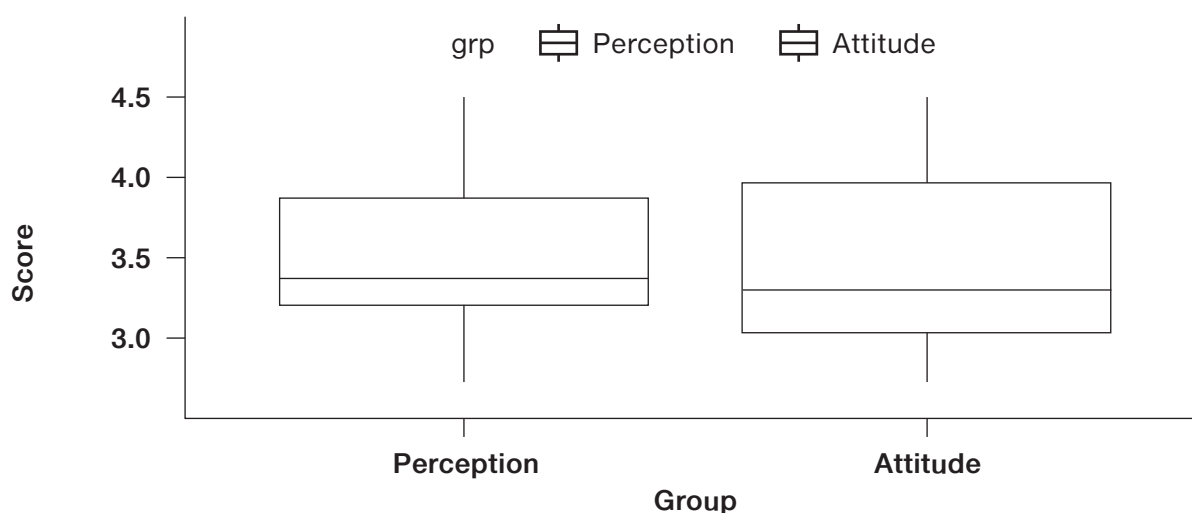


Figure 1. Preliminary analysis: box plot

The result of the study indicates that there is no massive gap between students' perception and attitudes toward the English

language. Both of variables show positive result toward English although the participants are not enrolled in English major.

The Perception and Attitudes of Students in Teaching Islamic Studies toward English.

From the data above, generally, the participants have realized the importance of the English language as an international language. It is shown from the data above the participants are “agree” to master or able to communicate in English in their field as an Islamic teacher. It is caused by most the Asian students had spent their time at least ten to fourteen years in learning English, and they truly realize the significance of English.

The positive perception and attitudes showed by students of teaching Islamic studies provide an advance progress in teaching Islamic. Because teaching Islamic content to the world is become the main aim of all Islamic scholars all over the world. This part of the wider concept of integrating Islam into human knowledge which functions across a broad range of subject areas (Hasan, 2007). Bringing and introducing Islamic content to the world by using language. They recognize their position as the future teachers and the needs of the current world is not about a teacher who sits and teaches Islamic content in their mother language, but the needs of the current situation are using English to spread and teach Islamic content to the world in the other word is called Da’wah. Supporting by interview result, one of the participant state

Extract 1

“as I am an Islamic teacher, I think

English is important for communicating with others. The ability to communicate in English makes life worth having fun, colors, culture together very well”. (P4)

In line with the questionnaire that had been distributed, to asses the students’ perception toward English in the context was evaluated through their perception toward the function of English in their learning in obtaining Islamic sources. Then for assessing students’ attitude toward English was focus on their interest to English and gaining Islamic knowledge from the discussion which used English and another written books as well.

The extract of the interview below shows the positive attitudes as Islamic students and teachers’ candidates. The participants are enrolled in teaching Islamic Studies.

Extract 2

“of course English help me for search content Islamic, most of the Islamic book from Arabic and English language. So Arabic I, not an expert, I like to use in English more Arabic” (P2).

The extract above describes a participant who has positive attitudes toward English. The Arabic language also had been taught to the students, but some of them prefer English than Arabic. The students are able to study or get Islamic knowledge in the book that is written in English.

Extract 3

“it is very important for me because

if I have English skill I can find another content and I can study teach with a foreigner” (P1).

”I think Muslim teacher must learn English because it will be easy to tell to the people about Islam for foreigners. English is important for searching for information in English and pedagogy for teaching” (P2).

The extracts above show the positive attitude if they can master English, they will be easy to do Da’wah to the foreigners as well as enrichment their knowledge in Islam. Furthermore, in the College of Islamic Studies there are many foreign students who are good in their religion, to do meaningful and effective communication is by using English.

In accordance with the participants’ answers from different instruments of data collection. They proved their opinions about how important English is for their future life. They have open-minded perception and attitudes toward English although they are in teaching Islamic studies major. This also demonstrates that the need of the students about the language is also influenced their perception and attitudes.

They perceive English as a language of power. They believe if they can master or use English not only for daily life but also in teaching it will give more benefit contribution to the mankind. The positive perception and attitudes about English showed that they have been through the process of filtering, managing and interpreting

an object or situation that has an essential contribution to their future. In the other hand they do Da’wah or deliver Islamic content to the world by using English moreover they can learn, understand and apply the new knowledge that is written in English.

4. Conclusion

The perception and attitudes have a close relationship in an individual to determine their achievement and ability in English. The positive perception and attitudes of students in teaching Islamic studies major toward English prove the existence of English as a lingua franca in all context in the society included in an Islamic teaching context. The non-native speakers’ students and teachers’ candidate who is able to master English will enhance the better knowledge and status level. They have such an excellent vision to develop their own English for communication, then if they can accomplish it, they will be professional Islamic educators who are able to deliver, teach and obtain the Islamic knowledge from written or oral sources and they will accomplish the Da’wah Islamic both for local people and foreigners. In order to develop and enhance the language ability in different context and purposes renew the teaching and learning design will assist to reach the purposes then by introducing and displaying values about learning a foreign language is expected to broaden the use of English.

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