

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

English language learning has received significant attention in educational systems worldwide, including in Indonesia. Understanding English properly enables more effective communication and facilitates access to global information and resources (Rao, 2019). In the language learning process, students' attitudes play a crucial impact in their learning outcomes. It is supported by Olatunji (2012) who argued that students' attitudes are relevant to language learning since they could affect their success in mastering English. As a result, teachers must notice students' attitudes to develop their English abilities as a way to students' language learning achievement.

However, learning a foreign language frequently encounters more challenges. Richards and Schmidt (2010) clarified that English is one of the hardest lessons to comprehend. These difficulties can lead them to negative attitudes toward learning English. Ahmed et al. (2021) said that attitude is a person's thoughts or emotional state towards learning, which will shape their behavior. Furthermore, a positive attitude not only affects students' English outcomes but is also associated with greater achievement in bolstering their English abilities and resulting in more effective learning (Ahmed et al., 2021; Zulfikar, 2019). Thus, both students' positive and negative attitudes will greatly affect their English learning achievement and learning effectiveness.

Additionally, this study was conducted in a high school in the small village of Tasikmalaya district, West Java, Indonesia. Based on an informal preliminary interview on January 12th, 2023, with the English teacher, the English classroom learning process encompassed various activities, including material delivery, classroom discussion, and interactive games. Considering many students in this area are still unfamiliar with English, the goal was to increase students' enthusiasm for learning. However, those English learning activities resulted in different responses from the students. For instance, one of

the students demonstrated disinterest by passively participating in classroom activities, did not pay attention to the teacher and peers during learning, depended on friends when given assignments by the teacher, and was reluctant to use English. The other student attentively paid attention to the lessons to gain a comprehensive understanding of the material, willingly asked questions, and engaged in various classroom activities. These differences indicate their interest in English, which is reflected in their behavior and ultimately determines their learning attitudes.

There are previous studies that explored the students' attitudes toward learning English with different research contexts, focuses, and methods used (Abidin, 2012; Ahmed et al., 2021; Isti and Istikharoh, 2019; Pelu, 2019; Seni and Lekatompessy, 2021; and Zulfikar et al., 2019). Several research findings claimed that students have positive attitudes toward learning English (Isti and Istikharoh, 2019; Pelu, 2019; Seni and Lekatompessy, 2021; and Zulfikar et al., 2019). In contrast, Abidin (2012) and Ahmed et al. (2021) pointed out that students' ignorance of the necessity of learning English leads to their negative attitudes.

However, little attention has been given to the investigation of students' attitudes in English classroom learning activities, particularly in the Indonesian high school context. This research gap motivated the present study, which explored the attitudes of high school students toward learning English through a descriptive case study. This study was expected to provide a different and more in-depth perspective on this topic by focusing on the high school context.

1.2 Formulation of the Problem

The study's background indicated that there was a problem that followed it. The present research is formulated in a question "what are the students' attitudes to English language learning activities in the classroom?".

1.3 Operational Definitions

To prevent the reader from misunderstanding the terms used, key terms

are defined. This study used several key terms:

- Students' Attitudes** : How Indonesian high school students behave in learning English.
- English Language Learning** : The face-to-face learning process to obtain and capture information related to English lessons in the classroom.
- Indonesian High School Context** : A high school in a small village in Tasikmalaya district, West Java, Indonesia, where this research was carried out.

1.4 Aim of the Research

Regarding the research question above, this study aimed to explore Indonesian high school students' attitudes toward English language learning activities in the classroom.

1.5 Significances of the Study

This study's results are expected to provide valuable insight for educators, especially English teachers, in implementing learning methods in English learning activities.

- Theoretical Contribution** : This research contributes to the existing theories of teaching and learning English to examine Indonesian high school students' attitudes toward learning English in the classroom.
- Empirical Contribution** : To present new insights about the attitudes of Indonesian high school students toward learning English in the classroom.
- Practical Contribution** : This study assists teachers in enhancing English language teaching quality by identifying students' attitudes in the classroom. It enables adjusting teaching methods, models, and approaches to foster positive attitudes toward learning English.