



From Local to Global: Examining Indonesian Law Students' Attitudes Towards English Proficiency

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Abstract

This study investigates the motivations and attitudes towards learning English among law students in Indonesia. Using a quantitative approach, 54 law students from a prominent Indonesian university were surveyed. Descriptive statistics and correlation analyses were employed to examine relationships between motivational factors, attitudes, and self-assessed proficiency. The findings reveal strong instrumental motivation driven by career prospects and academic advancement. While students value English proficiency, a notable gap exists between perceived importance and self-assessed language skills, mainly speaking and listening. Challenges in legal vocabulary acquisition and oral communication were identified as key areas for improvement. The study also found a preference for multimedia and interactive learning methods. These insights provide valuable direction for enhancing legal English education in Indonesia, suggesting a more tailored, interactive, and technology-enhanced approach that addresses law students' specific needs and preferences.

Keywords: *Attitudes, Legal English, Motivation, Proficiency*

Introduction

Law practice has transcended national boundaries, transforming English proficiency from a desirable skill to a fundamental requirement for legal professionals. Beyond its role as the dominant language in international law, English serves as the cornerstone of cross-border litigation, facilitates complex business transactions, and enables effective diplomatic discourse (Daly & Tomlinson, 2022; Bernstein, 2020). This linguistic dominance has created a pressing need for law schools, particularly in non-English speaking countries like Indonesia, to equip their students with strong English language skills. However,

acquiring these skills is complex and heavily influenced by students' motivations and attitudes towards learning English (Crystal, 2019).

The challenges law students face in mastering legal English are multifaceted, extending beyond mere language acquisition to encompass professional and cultural dimensions. Law students face additional hurdles in Indonesia, where English is not the primary language of instruction or daily communication. These linguistic and psychological challenges involve motivation, attitude, and self-efficacy in language learning (Nguyen & Nguyen, 2021).

Research in language learning motivation has identified two primary types of motivation: instrumental and integrative (Lamb, 2017). In legal English learning, instrumental motivation might drive students to view English as a tool for career advancement. In contrast, integrative motivation might lead them to engage with the language to integrate culturally and professionally. Understanding the interplay between these motivational factors and students' attitudes toward English is crucial for developing effective language-learning strategies in legal education (Hyland, 2018).

Law students' attitudes towards learning English can significantly impact their language acquisition process and ultimate proficiency. Negative attitudes, perhaps stemming from perceived cultural imperialism or linguistic inadequacy, can hinder progress regardless of initial motivation (Dörnyei & Al-Hoorie, 2017). Conversely, positive attitudes can enhance learning outcomes and foster greater engagement with the language.

While extensive research has been conducted on English language learning motivation in general academic contexts, there is a noticeable gap in studies focusing specifically on law students' experiences and perspectives, particularly within the Indonesian educational landscape. This gap is significant because the unique demands of legal English, with its specialized terminology and discourse conventions, may require tailored approaches to motivation and attitude development (Rao, 2018).

This study will examine the motivations and attitudes towards learning English among law students at a prominent higher education institution to address this research gap and contribute to more effective legal English instruction in Indonesia. Using a mixed-methods approach combining quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews, this research aims to explore the complex nature of student perspectives on legal English learning (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The study will investigate several key aspects of motivation and attitudes among Indonesian law students learning legal English. It will explore the primary motivations driving students to learn English, examining whether these are rooted in instrumental goals, integrative interests, or both. Additionally, the research will delve into students' attitudes toward English as a language for legal practice and their perceptions of its importance in their future careers. The relationship between motivation, attitudes, and self-perceived competence in legal English will

also be examined, along with how cultural factors unique to Indonesia shape students' motivations and attitudes toward learning legal English. Furthermore, the study will assess the impact of current legal English instruction methods on students' motivation and attitudes, identifying potential areas for improvement.

By gaining a deeper understanding of Indonesian law students' motivations and attitudes towards learning English, this study seeks to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge of language learning psychology and the practical needs of future legal professionals in Indonesia. The insights gained will be invaluable in shaping language policies, designing targeted support systems, and creating more engaging and effective legal English learning experiences tailored to the Indonesian context (Bacha & Bahous, 2018).

This research aims to contribute not only to the improvement of legal English education in Indonesia but also to the broader field of legal English pedagogy. The findings may inform curriculum development and teaching strategies in law schools across non-English speaking countries, particularly those with linguistic and cultural contexts similar to Indonesia's. By addressing the specific motivational and attitudinal factors affecting Indonesian law students, this study will play a crucial role in enhancing their global competitiveness and strengthening the country's position in the international legal community (Li, 2018).

In conclusion, this comprehensive study of motivation and attitudes towards learning English among Indonesian law students represents a significant step towards understanding and addressing the complex psychological factors influencing language acquisition in specialized legal contexts. The insights gained from this study have the potential to transform legal English education in Indonesia, equipping the next generation of Indonesian lawyers with the linguistic tools and motivation they need to thrive in an increasingly globalized legal landscape.

Method

This investigation adopted a quantitative methodological framework to examine Indonesian law students' motivations and attitudes toward English learning. The research drew from a demographically diverse sample of 54 law students at a leading Indonesian university, strategically selecting participants across different academic years to capture a comprehensive spectrum of student perspectives.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of Participants

Characteristic	Value
Total Participants	54
Gender	Female: 30 (55.6%) Male: 24 (44.4%)
Age Range	19-37 years
Mean Age (SD)	21.3 years (SD = 1.8)
Academic Year	First Year - Final Year

Data was collected using a structured questionnaire to assess students' motivations and attitudes toward learning English for legal purposes. The questionnaire consisted of 30 items divided into three main sections: demographic information, motivations for learning legal English, and attitudes toward learning and using legal English. The motivation and attitude items were measured using a 5-point Likert scale.

Limitations

Although the sample provides meaningful insights, its relatively small size may limit generalizability. Additionally, reliance on self-assessment introduces potential bias. Future studies could benefit from combining quantitative and qualitative methods for a more comprehensive analysis.

Results

The survey of 54 law students at an Indonesian university reveals significant insights into their motivations and attitudes towards learning English. The demographic profile of the participants shows a diverse group, with a slight majority of females (55.6%) compared to males (44.4%), and ages ranging from 19 to 37 years old, though most were in their early 20s. This diversity in age and academic progression provides a comprehensive view of law students' perspectives across different stages of their education. The wide age range, spanning nearly two decades, suggests that the study captures the views of both traditional students and those pursuing law as a second career or returning to education, potentially offering insights into how motivations and challenges may vary with life experience.

Motivations for Learning English

The survey revealed strong instrumental motivation among law students for learning English. Figure 1 illustrates the primary motivations cited by the participants.



Figure 1: Bar chart of motivations for learning English

As shown in Figure 1, improving communication skills was the most cited reason (90%), followed closely by enhancing career prospects (85%). This strong instrumental motivation aligns with findings from similar studies in other non-English-speaking countries (Zheng & Cheng, 2018). This finding suggests a strong instrumental motivation among law students to view English as a practical tool for academic and professional advancement. The emphasis on career prospects and employability indicates that students are acutely aware of the competitive job market and see English proficiency as a key differentiator. The desire to access international legal resources highlights the global nature of legal practice and research, suggesting that students recognize the importance of staying current with international legal developments (Kirkpatrick, 2020; Seidlhofer, 2021). This recognition reflects the increasing internationalization of law and the growing need for cross-border legal expertise, underscoring the role of English as an international language in the legal field (Jenkins, 2018). The importance of English in law studies was generally rated high, with most students scoring it 3 or 4 on a 4-point scale. This high rating underscores the perceived crucial role of English in legal education and practice. Students recognized English's significance for reading international legal journals, participating in international conferences, and communicating with international clients, indicating an awareness of the global nature of legal practice. This recognition may also reflect the increasing internationalization of law and the growing need for cross-border legal expertise.

Self-Assessed English Proficiency

Students' self-assessment of their English skills revealed an interesting pattern, as depicted in Figure 2.



Figure 2: Graph comparing self-assessed proficiency across skills

As illustrated in Figure 2, students generally rated their receptive skills (reading and writing) higher than their productive skills (speaking and listening). The mean self-assessment scores were: reading (4.2), writing (3.9), speaking (3.0), and listening (3.2) on a 5-point scale. This discrepancy could be attributed to the nature of legal education, which often emphasizes written materials and may provide fewer opportunities for oral communication practice in English.

This discrepancy could be attributed to the nature of legal education, which often emphasizes written materials and may provide fewer opportunities for oral communication practice in English. Many identified vocabulary and grammar as areas needing improvement, which is not surprising given the specialized nature

of legal language. This self-perception aligns with the challenges reported in learning English, which included a lack of legal vocabulary, difficulty in spoken English conversation, problems understanding spoken English, lack of motivation, and difficulties with English grammar and writing. Identifying these specific challenges provides valuable insights for curriculum design, suggesting a need for more focused instruction in legal terminology, increased opportunities for spoken practice, and targeted grammar instruction within a legal context.

Learning Preferences

Regarding learning preferences, video emerged as the most popular medium for learning English, as shown in Figure 3.

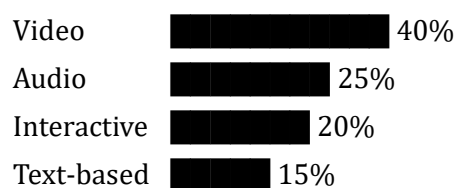


Figure 3: Graph of preferred learning methods

Video was the preferred learning method for 40% of students, followed by audio (25%) and interactive methods (20%). This preference for multimedia and interactive learning tools suggests a desire for engaging and varied learning experiences, possibly reflecting the digital native status of many of the students.

This preference for multimedia and interactive learning tools suggests a desire for engaging and varied learning experiences, possibly reflecting the digital native status of many of the students. The popularity of video content could be due to its ability to provide both visual and auditory input, making it an effective medium for language learning. Many students also expressed interest in practical, law-specific English learning materials, indicating a need for specialized content in legal English courses. This preference for specialized content underscores the importance of English for Specific Purposes (ESP) approaches in legal English instruction, where language learning is contextualized within the field of law (Hutchinson & Waters, 2021; Paltridge & Starfield, 2022). Northcott (2019) specifically emphasizes the importance of tailored language education for law professionals, which aligns with the findings.

Duration of Learning English

The duration of English learning varied among students, with most reporting 2-4 years or more of study. This range suggests that while some students may have been studying English consistently throughout their academic careers, others may have had more limited exposure. Notably, many students have not taken additional English courses outside their university curriculum, suggesting that their primary

exposure to English learning is within their law program. This finding highlights the critical role that university-based English instruction plays in these students' language development and emphasizes the responsibility of law schools to provide comprehensive and effective English language support. It also indicates a potential area for improvement, as encouraging extracurricular English study could enhance students' language skills and confidence.

Discussion

The findings of this quantitative study provide valuable insights into the motivations and attitudes of Indonesian law students toward learning English, aligning with and expanding upon previous research in this field. The predominance of instrumental motivation among these students corroborates findings from similar studies in other non-English-speaking countries. For instance, Zheng and Cheng (2018) found that Chinese law students were primarily motivated by career prospects and academic advancement when learning legal English. This pragmatic approach to language learning suggests that legal English curricula should emphasize practical applications and career-related benefits to maintain student motivation.

The mismatch between students' perceived importance of English and their self-efficacy in language skills is a significant finding that echoes results from studies in other contexts. Nguyen and Nguyen (2021) observed a similar phenomenon among Vietnamese law students, where the high perceived importance of English did not necessarily correlate with high self-efficacy. This discrepancy could be a source of anxiety or motivation, depending on how it's addressed in the curriculum. The quantitative data, particularly the Likert scale responses on self-assessment, provides a clear measure of this gap, allowing for targeted interventions to boost students' confidence in English, particularly in professional legal contexts.

The lower self-assessment scores in speaking and listening skills highlight a critical area for improvement in legal English education. This skills gap is consistent with findings from Rao, (2018) and Basturkmen, (2019), which also identified oral communication as a primary challenge. The survey results, showing lower scores for these skills across the sample, provide strong statistical evidence for this trend. This suggests a need for more focus on oral communication in legal English curricula, potentially through interactive teaching methods such as discussions, presentations, and mock legal scenarios.

Vocabulary, particularly legal terminology, emerged as a key challenge for many students, a finding that aligns with research by Li (2018) on Chinese law students. The frequency with which this issue was reported in this survey underscores its significance. Implementing corpus-based approaches to legal English vocabulary teaching, as suggested by Rao (2018), could be an effective strategy to address this challenge, helping students build a robust legal lexicon

essential for their professional development.

The preference for video and audio materials in language learning reflects broader trends in educational technology (Bacha & Bahous, 2018; Mayer, 2020). This preference for multimedia resources aligns with cognitive theories of multimedia learning, which suggest that combining visual and auditory input can enhance language acquisition (Mayer, 2020). The quantitative data showing a strong preference for these media across the sample provides robust support for incorporating more multimedia resources into legal English instruction. This approach aligns with current pedagogical trends and caters to diverse learning styles, potentially making legal English more accessible and engaging for students.

An interesting cultural and contextual factor revealed by the data is the preference of most students to use both Indonesian and English in their future careers. This bilingual preference is similar to findings by Dörnyei and Al-Hoorie (2017) in their study of language learning motivation in multilingual contexts. The clear statistical trend in the data towards this preference indicates a need for a nuanced approach to legal education that respects the local context while preparing students for global engagement.

Despite many students learning English for several years, motivation remains challenging for some, as indicated by the survey responses. This persistent motivational issue aligns with Lamb's (2017) longitudinal studies on language learning motivation in Indonesia. The quantitative nature of this study allows us to see the prevalence of this issue across the sample, suggesting a widespread need for more engaging and relevant English learning experiences tailored specifically to law students' needs and interests.

The use of a quantitative research method in this study, particularly the structured questionnaire with Likert scale items, provided several advantages. It allowed for a systematic collection of data from a relatively large sample of students, enabling us to identify clear trends and patterns in motivations and attitudes. The statistical analysis of this data provides a robust foundation for generalizing findings to the broader population of Indonesian law students. However, it's important to acknowledge that while quantitative methods excel at identifying trends, they may not capture the full depth of individual experiences. Future research could benefit from a mixed-methods approach, combining the quantitative findings with qualitative interviews to provide a more nuanced understanding of students' perspectives.

The comprehensive findings provide valuable insights for improving legal English education in Indonesia. These findings suggest a need for a more tailored, interactive, and technology-enhanced approach to teaching legal English that addresses Indonesian law students' specific motivations, challenges, and preferences. This aligns with current trends in ESP curriculum design (Basturkmen, 2019; Paltridge & Starfield, 2022), emphasizing the importance of needs analysis and context-specific materials in language instruction. The quantitative data

collected offers a solid basis for curriculum design and pedagogical interventions. Future research could explore the effectiveness of targeted interventions based on these findings, potentially leading to more effective and engaging legal English programs in Indonesian universities. Additionally, comparative studies with law students in other non-English speaking countries could further illuminate the unique aspects of the Indonesian context and contribute to a broader global understanding of legal English education.

Conclusion

This study provides valuable insights into Indonesian law students' motivations, challenges, and preferences regarding English language learning. The quantitative approach, surveying 54 law students from an Indonesian university, captured diverse perspectives across different ages and academic stages.

The results demonstrate a strong instrumental motivation among students for learning English, with 90% citing improved communication skills and 85% mentioning career prospects as primary motivators. This pragmatic approach to language learning aligns with the increasingly global nature of legal practice. Students overwhelmingly recognized the importance of English in their law studies, rating it highly on a 4-point scale.

A significant finding of this study is the discrepancy between students' high regard for the importance of English and their lower self-assessment in certain language skills, particularly speaking and listening. Students rated their reading skills highest (mean 4.2 out of 5), followed by writing (3.9), while speaking (3.0) and listening (3.2) were notably lower. This gap points to a critical area for improvement in legal English instruction.

The research also revealed interesting patterns in learning preferences. Video emerged as the most popular medium for learning English (40% preference), followed by audio (25%) and interactive methods (20%). This preference for multimedia and interactive learning tools suggests a need for more engaging and varied learning experiences in legal English education.

Based on these findings, several recommendations can be made to enhance legal English education in Indonesia. First and foremost, there is a clear need to develop curricula that balance all language skills, with particular emphasis on improving speaking and listening abilities in professional legal contexts. Given the lower self-assessment scores in these areas (3.0 and 3.2 out of 5, respectively), focused attention on oral communication skills within legal settings could significantly benefit students.

Incorporating more multimedia and interactive elements into language instruction is another crucial recommendation. The strong preference for video (40%) and audio (25%) learning methods, along with interactive approaches (20%), suggests that students would respond well to a more diverse and engaging learning environment. This could include legal documentaries, recorded court

proceedings, interactive legal simulations, and online discussion forums to provide a more immersive and varied learning experience.

Addressing the challenge of specialized legal vocabulary is also paramount. Focusing on building a robust legal lexicon through corpus-based approaches and contextual learning would directly address one of the key difficulties identified by students. This could involve the creation of a legal English corpus specific to Indonesian law, which could then be used to develop targeted vocabulary exercises and materials.

To bridge the gap between classroom learning and real-world application, providing more opportunities for the practical application of English in simulated legal scenarios is recommended. This could include mock trials, contract negotiations, or client counseling sessions conducted in English, allowing students to apply their language skills in contexts that closely mimic their future professional environments.

Lastly, encouraging extracurricular English learning activities could supplement formal instruction and provide additional opportunities for language practice. This might involve establishing English language law clubs, organizing legal English debate competitions, or facilitating internships with international law firms or organizations where English is commonly used. Such activities would enhance language skills and boost students' confidence in using English in professional settings.

This study contributes to the growing research on legal English education in non-English-speaking countries. While it offers significant insights into the Indonesian context, it also aligns with findings from similar studies in other countries, suggesting some universal challenges and preferences in legal English learning.

However, it's important to acknowledge the limitations of this study. While providing valuable preliminary data, the sample size of 54 students suggests that future research would benefit from a larger, more diverse sample to enhance generalizability. Additionally, a mixed-methods approach incorporating qualitative data could provide deeper insights into students' experiences and attitudes.

In conclusion, this study provides valuable insights into Indonesian law students' motivations, challenges, and preferences in learning legal English. The findings underscore the need for tailored, interactive, and technology-enhanced curricula that address specific skill gaps while leveraging students' learning preferences. By incorporating oral communication activities, multimedia resources, and culturally relevant materials, legal English education can better prepare students for the demands of the global legal profession.

Future research should adopt mixed methods to explore these issues further and evaluate the long-term effectiveness of proposed interventions. As the legal field continues to globalize, equipping Indonesian law students with robust English proficiency will be crucial for their professional success.

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