

# The fever of English 2.0 in Indonesia: University students' and faculty members' attitudes towards English in different multilingual landscapes

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## ABSTRACT

The global spread of English has become a widely felt phenomenon, arousing different perceptions and attitudes among those who encounter it. The dominant use of English in virtual spaces has led to the emergence of 'English 2.0,' which has been perceived as a new concept of learning English involving networked learning and the use of digital technologies. This study explores Indonesian university students' and faculty members' attitudes towards the use of English in both face-to-face and virtual contexts. Adopting a mixed methods approach, it involved two hundred and fifty-one respondents through which questionnaires were distributed and completed. Responses to Likert-scale items were analysed using a paired-samples *t*-test of SPSS, while open-ended responses were used to yield a more in-depth analysis. The results show that there were mixed attitudes towards English among the respondents. This study suggests that while virtual domains can provide a space for learning and practicing English, a beneficial utilisation of the language ultimately depends on how English language learning is planned and designed.

**Keywords:** English 2.0; Indonesian higher education; language attitudes; language policy; language preferences

**First Received:**

20 March 2018

**Revised:**

18 August 2018

**Accepted:**

20 September 2018

**Final Proof Received:**

25 September 2018

**Published:**

30 September 2018

**How to cite (in APA style):**

Abdurahman, H. N., Gandana, I. S. S., & Novianti, N. (2018). The fever of English 2.0 in Indonesia: University students' and faculty members' attitudes towards English in different multilingual landscapes. *Indonesian Journal of Applied Linguistics*, 8, 482-488. doi: 10.17509/ijal.v8i2.13315

## INTRODUCTION

As the role of English as a global language is increasingly important, people from inner and expanding circles have different perceptions and attitudes towards the use of English in their English-speaking communities in which the social, ideological, and educational values impact the use of the language (McKenzie, 2010; Tokumoto & Shibata, 2011; Young, 2006). Understanding this phenomenon can help policy makers to take suitable pedagogical measures towards English language learning and teaching (McKenzie, 2010). In Indonesia, for example, governmental attitudes towards the use of English and English language teaching have been dynamic (see Lie, 2017;

Widodo, 2016). Although English has been given priority in Indonesia's foreign language education, the language has also been perceived negatively, as it is considered to 'erode' national and local languages (Lauder, 2008). As a result, English is barely used as a medium of instruction, albeit the important role it plays in Indonesian academic contexts (Widodo, 2016). At the tertiary level of education, students are expected to have passive and active competence of English, and yet many are still lacking the required proficiency (Lie, 2017). Their inadequate competence in the language may consequently lead to negative perceptions and attitudes towards English (Garrett, 2010).

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The rise of the Internet in many areas in Indonesia, on the other hand, has made English accessible to many people across the nation (Lie, 2017). While the use of English is relatively more limited to daily face-to-face interaction, English has taken a more dominant role in computer-mediated communication. The dominance of English in virtual domains has led to the emergence of 'English 2.0,' which has been perceived as a new concept of learning English involving networked learning and the use of digital technologies. Responding to the emergence of this new concept, Sun and Yang (2013), drawing on the ideas of Duffy (2008) and Karpati (2009), highlight that English 2.0 can "provide teachers with various possibilities for engaging students in cooperative and collaborative knowledge building and knowledge sharing" (p.205). In line with this current trend, a number of recent studies have reported that English has been regularly and creatively used as a means of communication among Indonesian social media users (e.g., Abdurahman, 2016; Lie, 2017). As these virtual platforms provide wider networks for individuals to engage in, these spaces may eventually bring about changes in Indonesian people's perceptions and attitudes towards the use of English within the country. Although many studies concerning language attitudes have been conducted in various Asian contexts, those offering a comparison of attitudes in regard to the use of English in a variety of contexts are still limited (McKenzie, 2010; Tokumoto & Shibata, 2011; Young, 2006). To fill this void, the present study aims to provide two critical insights. First, it explores university students' and faculty members' attitudes towards the use of English in different multilingual settings, involving both daily face-to-face interactions (henceforth DI) and virtual interactions such as online chatting and computer-mediated communication (henceforth CMC). Second, it attempts to offer possible implications for language teachers and curriculum designers.

## **METHOD**

This study was conducted in two public universities located in two different provinces in Indonesia after obtaining universities' formal permissions. The institutions were selected primarily due to easy access for the researchers and the diverse social and academic backgrounds of the respondents. All of the respondents had at least one social media account. None of them, however, took English as their major, nor were they required to use English during their studies. Most participants had studied English for more than five years (71%) and their ages ranged from eighteen to twenty-five (92%). They all were familiar with English and the use of the Internet. The respondents were predominantly female (61%).

The questionnaire distributed was written in *Bahasa Indonesia*, and it consisted of two parts: five-point Likert-scale items and open-ended questions about language choices. The Likert-scale items were adapted from

Young's (2006) study, which also investigated attitudes of non-native speakers of English (i.e., Macanese and Chinese students) towards English. In this part of the questionnaire, four individual items and thirty paired-items were presented. These items covered the following topics: (1) attitudes towards the use of English, (2) the use of English in academic contexts, and (3) self-perceived attitudes when using English. The second part of the questionnaire highlighted questions regarding language preferences in two different contexts: daily face-to-face interactions (DI) and virtual interactions involving computer-mediated communication (CMC).

The questionnaires were distributed both manually and electronically to university students and faculty members of the participating universities. The completion of the questionnaires was completely voluntary, and it took approximately 15 minutes to complete. There were in total 251 completed responses obtained from 240 manually and 20 electronically distributed questionnaires. Eight printed questionnaires and one electronic response were not taken into account due to incomplete responses. During the manual distribution of the questionnaires, the researchers, in *Bahasa Indonesia*, provided a brief explanation regarding the research and clarified terms that students might not be familiar with. Responses elicited were then computed and categorised into themes (see Appendix 1).

As Multivariate ANOVA (MANOVA) analysis did not yield significant differences in terms of social and academic backgrounds of the respondents, university students' and faculty members' responses were therefore not distinguished in the presentation of the results. Paired-samples *t*-test through SPSS was utilised to elicit respondents' attitudes and to find correlations of responses in relation to the use of English in face-to-face and virtual contexts. It is important to note, however, that the data were ordinal in nature. Consequently, a mean score of four does not mean that it is numerically twice that of a mean score of two; it simply means that it is ranked higher. In addition, the five-scale Likert items enabled the researchers to classify the respondents' perceptions more easily, with a disagreement indicating a negative perception, while an agreement indicating the opposite. A score below 3 (mean <3) does not mean that all respondents disagree and vice versa.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Responses elicited through the questionnaires were classified into four major themes: (1) attitudes towards the use of English, (2) language preferences, (3) the attitude-preference nexus in the use of English in multilingual contexts, and (4) implications for language teachers and curriculum designers.

### **Attitudes towards the use of English**

The respondents generally had slightly negative attitudes towards the use of English in both types of interactions (mean = 2.8), but they also slightly

disagreed that *Bahasa Indonesia* is superior to English in both DI (Mean= 2.5, SD= .95) and CMC (Mean= 2.7, SD= 1.02). While the respondents agreed that English sounds very pleasant (Mean = 3.2, SD = 1.05), many disagreed regarding the use of English as a medium of instruction (Mean= 2.9, SD= 1.05) and its use in textbooks designed for Indonesian students (Mean= 2.7, SD= 1.04). A summary of the Likert-scale items presented in the questionnaire is presented in Table 1.

Each paired-item regarding the use of English in Indonesia (see Table 2) has a high correlation ( $r>.500$ ) and can be considered significantly correlated ( $\rho<0.001$ ). This means that if English is perceived

negatively in DI context, it will be perceived quite similarly in CMC context, and vice versa. Statements regarding the use of English in DI were rated higher than that in CMC in two statements (items 1 and 3). Items 2 and 5 were rated quite similarly, and item 4 is the only item where CMC was rated higher. Moreover, the statements about the benefits for Indonesians when using English (items 1 and 5) were responded to quite positively (see Figure 1). This can be concluded that the respondents may have more positive attitudes towards the use of English when it is related to Indonesia's development.

Table 1. A summary of the Likert-scale items in the questionnaire

Item number	Attitudinal Items type	Mean Score (Sd)
1, 4, 7, 8	General attitudes	2.8(1.01)
2, 3	The use of English in Education	2.8(1.04)
5, 6, 9, 10, 27-32	Use of English in Indonesia	3.0(1.06)
11-26, 33, 34	Self-perceived attitudes when using English	2.5(1.02)
<b>Average</b>		<b>2.8(1.03)</b>

Table 2. Breakdown of the use of English in Indonesia

Questionnaire items	Mean difference*	Correlation (r)
1. The use of English is important to the success of Indonesia's development.	.24	0.554**
2. Talking in English with other Indonesians is a symbol of an educated person.	.01	0.755**
3. I feel comfortable when hearing an Indonesian speaking to another in English	.18	0.68**
4. Indonesian people should also use English	-.21	0.713**
5. Indonesian people should learn to use English for Indonesians' sake	.00	0.698**

\* Positive results (.xx) mean that DI is rated higher than CMC, and negative results (-.xx) mean that CMC is rated higher than DI.

\*\*  $\rho<0.001$

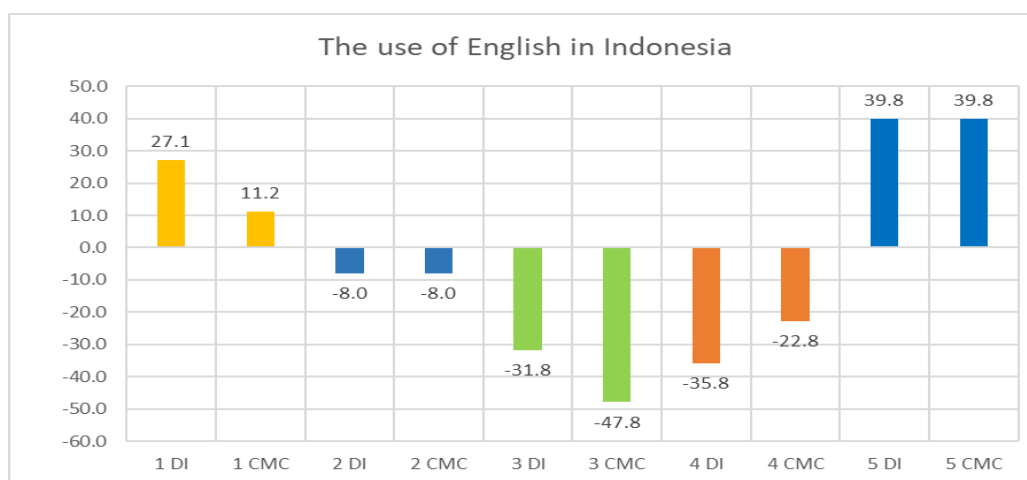


Figure 1. Agree-disagree responses towards the use of English in Indonesia

Note: Positive percentages mean that the statement is agreed more and negative results mean that it is disagreed more.

Similarly, nine paired-items regarding self-perceived attitudes when using English (Table 3) are also significantly correlated (Pearson's  $r > .600$ ,  $\rho < 0.001$ ). It can therefore be inferred that the attitudes towards the statements in both DI and CMC were

correlated. Five statements were ranked higher in the DI and four in the CMC. One of the highest mean differences was the feelings of being 'a foreigner in one's own country' (.20). This might be related to the current ideological power of *Bahasa Indonesia* which

was often emphasised as the language of patriotism, nationalism and interethnic solidarity (Widodo 2016). As a result, the use of foreign language(s) by Indonesians in real-life interactions was often perceived as being ‘less Indonesian’; yet, such a sentiment did not seem to apply to the use of English in virtual interactions. Interestingly, the use of English in academic contexts is perceived to mark a higher educational status.

All of the statements regarding the respondents’ self-perceived attitudes when using English, in fact, have negative values (Figure 2). This means that all statements in both DI and CMC were mostly disagreed with when it dealt with self-perceptions. Statements

regarding one’s show of affection using English (items 1, 2 and 4) revealed a higher disagreed percentage in DI. The difference is even higher in the statement of being comfortable when using English with Indonesian friends (more than 20% disagreed percentage). Considering these figures, it can be concluded that, generally, the respondents tended to display negative perceptions and attitudes in regard to their own uses of English, be it in DI or CMC contexts. Within the latter context, however, the use of English appeared to be seen by many respondents as a norm and was therefore not associated with the feelings of being ‘a foreigner in one’s own country.’

Table 3. Breakdown of self-perceived attitudes when using English

Questionnaire items	Mean difference*	Correlation (r)
1. I feel comfortable to use English with my Indonesian friends	-.27	0.678**
2. I love talking with Indonesians in English	-.10	0.648**
3. I feel easy when interacting in English with Indonesians	.10	0.676**
4. I use English to be friendly	-.09	0.715**
5. I use English with Indonesians to follow the current trend	-.10	0.828**
6. At times I fear that by using English with Indonesians, I will become like a foreigner in my own country	.20	0.759**
7. If I use English with Indonesians, I will be praised by my family, friends and/or colleagues	.04	0.817**
8. If I use English with Indonesians, my educational status is raised	.13	0.757**
9. When using English, somehow I do not feel like an Indonesian	.07	0.811**

\* Positive results (.xx) mean that DI is rated higher than CMC and negative results (-.xx) mean that CMC is rated higher than DI

\*\*  $\rho < 0.001$

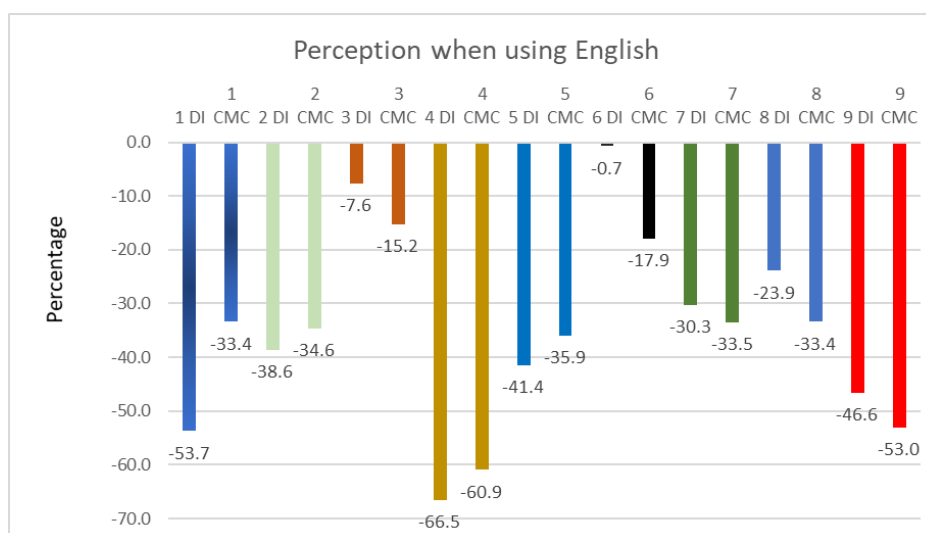


Figure 2. Agree-disagree responses when using English

**Language preferences**

In identifying the respondents’ language preferences, responses to the open-ended questions in the questionnaires were drawn on. A summary of the respondents’ preferences is presented in Table 4 (see also Appendix 1). The respondents preferred to use Bahasa Indonesia twice as often in daily interactions as in computer-mediated communication, making English

the least preferred language to use in both types of interactions. Forty-six percent and sixty-five percent of the respondents reported that they preferred to use a code-mixing of Bahasa Indonesia and English in DI and CMC, respectively. The fact that the percentage is higher in CMC appears to be in line with the respondents’ self-perceived attitudes towards English in the CMC context.

Table 4. Language preferences in DI and CMC

	Preferences in DI	Preferences in CMC
Bahasa Indonesia	52%	26%
English	2%	9%
Code-mixing of both	46%	65%

### The attitude-preference nexus in the use of English in multilingual contexts

As the results indicated, the respondents' self-perceptions and general attitudes towards the use of English were rather negative, and these may be due to two major factors: (1) inadequate proficiency in using English for communicative purposes and (2) negative social perceptions towards English. These are indicated in the respondents' own statements that revealed their lack of confidence in using English and their fear of being judged negatively when using English too much. Garrett's (2010) study has also previously demonstrated that people's inadequate ability in English can influence their views of the language.

When asked about language preferences, code-mixing became an option for many of the respondents (see Table 4). The respondents reported that they code-mixed English and *Bahasa Indonesia* in virtual platforms as English provided them with a 'common ground', but they also used *Bahasa Indonesia* to display their nationality. The code-mixed variety was also viewed to be more 'attractive,' especially for posting "a status in social media". The code mixing also enabled them to write "a shorter status, especially in Twitter." Additionally, those who preferred English in CMC usually stated personal-related reasons, as indicated in the following statements: "to gain ability to speak English will be useful in the future" and (2) "to compete with other Asian countries". These reasons imply that a number of respondents were aware that English is perceived as a capital in the global market (Lauder, 1998; Zacharias, 2003).

At the affective level (see Table 3: items 1, 2, 4, and 5), there were fewer respondents who disagreed with the use of English in the CMC context. One may speculate that using English is more acceptable in virtual landscapes. This was also evidenced by some respondents in their statements: "*Bahasa Indonesia* is more acceptable" for communicative purposes in daily conversations, whereas English is more acceptable in virtual interactions and people will be "judged less negatively [when interacting in English] in CMC." Ferguson (2006) has noted that learners or L2 speakers of English may be ridiculed by their peers, especially when their spoken English (i.e., *bahasa gado-gado*) is dissociated from both the native-like fluency and the identity and norms of the local community. In other words, in Indonesia, English lacks the integrative function (i.e., not being used in daily communication). These arguments also seem to be in agreement with what some respondents stated. They believed that (1) "In real-life interaction, *Bahasa Indonesia* is more

easily pronounced than English" and (2) "mixing English with *Bahasa Indonesia* means that the users have a low English proficiency." These respondents, on the other hand, noted that it was easier to use English in CMC context as they could just type the words and "use Google Translate to find certain English phrases" to use in virtual platforms. This increased their preferences to use *bahasa gado-gado*, and English-only phrases, in virtual platforms.

In day-to-day interaction, many Indonesians use more than one language repertoire other than English (i.e., ethnic languages). Thus, it remains unlikely that English will be chosen as their main preferred language. In the virtual world, however, people tend to have more contacts with those who do not share the same linguistic background. This was also pointed out by some of the respondents regarding their microblogging networks. These respondents, consequently, feel welcomed when they used English in virtual interactions. Moreover, the emergence of computer-mediated communication, which is now shifting towards mobile devices such as smartphones, appears to open up wider opportunities for Indonesians to interact more with non-Indonesians. Swift flow of information and wider mobile network interactions in English 2.0 results in a higher utilisation of the language in the virtual world. In short, virtual landscapes offer English interaction platforms resembling the language acquisition process in which the interaction occurs naturally.

### Implications for language teachers and curriculum designers

The results indicate that the respondents have ambivalent attitudes towards English. The existence of *Bahasa Indonesia*, which seems to possess a higher ideological status within the country, appears to limit the possible utilisation of English. The negative perceptions attached to English during the New Order regime may also have affected the current societal views on the use of the language in day-to-day interaction, especially the perception of the older generations. For many Indonesians, the interactions they have with English mostly come from dramas, films, and other cultural products from the USA. As a result, English is often associated with Americanization, which has also frequently been negatively perceived (Martin-Anatias, 2018). Using English in daily interactions is considered to diminish Indonesianness and is often associated with being Americanized or Westernized (Gunarwan, 1993; Martin-Anatias, 2018).

In the past decades, English language teaching and learning have focused on the attainment of passive English for achieving academic purposes. Despite the current shift in more active English, emphasising speaking and writing abilities, the lack of English learning ecology in real-life contexts makes the purposes of 'mastering' the language less achievable. In view of this, English 2.0 appears to offer a suitable space for students to not only practice their English but also to learn the language through various services and

tools available online. Podcasts, vlogs, and microblogging are some of the media that can be used for language learning purposes. It is high time that teachers and curriculum designers incorporate network-based learning and digital technologies into the English language pedagogies, allowing students to learn and explore the use of English beyond classroom walls. In so doing, language teachers are also simultaneously fostering learner autonomy in the learning process. The future of English in Indonesia is highly dependent on the planning and management of language learning enacted by policy makers, and the emergence of virtual landscapes can provide boundless possible English learning platforms that accommodate learners' needs.

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### Appendix 1

The count of participants' arguments.

Theme	Argument	Times used	
		DI	CMC
<i>Cognitive</i>	I am ashamed if speaking English incorrectly	20	5
	Prefer mixed languages because my English is not really good	2	10
	Using English is a sign of an intelligent person, mixing English and Indonesia means the ones who use it has bad English ability	3	8
	I can barely use English	7	2
	I am afraid to be judged too western-minded if using English too much	6	0
<i>Educational</i>	To gain more vocabulary	25	15
	To learn and communicate with English speaking people	5	32
	To have direct practice, not only in classroom	15	9
<i>National</i>	To respect the Indonesia's founding fathers	20	15
	I am Indonesian	15	12
	To promote <i>Bahasa Indonesia</i> to Foreigners	5	19
	To preserve culture through <i>Bahasa</i>	24	0
	Indonesia is the unity language for Indonesians	15	8
	Prefer local language to English	13	2
<i>Communicative</i>	My friends are Indonesians	34	10
	Friends from various countries	5	32
	Some expressions are better expressed in English	15	22
	I cannot speak English very well	30	0
	Indonesian is easier to understand	23	5
	Depends on whom I interact with	10	10
	Most of my colleagues, friends and families do not speak/understand English	15	5
	My friends are more enthusiastic to comment when I make an English status in social media	0	17
	Make my status less formal/friendlier	0	17
	Easier to communicate with foreign networks	0	16
	English is International language	0	15
	Can look up for English words using Google translate	0	13
	I can write status shorter using English	0	10
	Indonesian is easier to pronounce	4	0
	Using English, I can communicate secretly with my friends	1	0
<i>Personal</i>	English seems cooler than Indonesian	3	27
	Good English ability would be useful in the future	28	0
	Using mixed languages will give me better practice that is useful in the modern world	2	22
	It is more comfortable to use Indonesian language(s)	15	2
	People will not judge directly when I am using English	0	13
	Using English will be judged arrogant	9	0
	I feel up-to-date when using English	0	8
	I only use social media to read online news	0	5
	To be able to compete with people from other Asian countries	5	0
	Prefer to share thoughts in English	0	3
	Depend on the mood	0	2
	<b>Total</b>	<b>374</b>	<b>391</b>