

Students' Attitude in Studying English for Foreign Language in Rural Area

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Abstract. This study explores the attitudes of rural high school students towards learning English, utilizing Self System and Gardner's socio-educational model as theoretical frameworks. Through qualitative analysis of interview responses, the study identifies key factors influencing students' engagement with English language learning. Positive attitudes are linked to personal aspirations, supportive family and peer influences, and effective teaching methods. Students with positive attitudes view English as a gateway to higher education, better job opportunities, and cultural exchange. Conversely, negative attitudes arise from a perceived lack of relevance of English in the rural context, insufficient support, and limited access to resources. Negative classroom experiences and the absence of extracurricular activities further diminish motivation. The study highlights the need for improved educational resources, teacher training in interactive pedagogies, and opportunities for cultural exchange to enhance English language learning in rural areas. These findings provide insights into the complex interplay of motivational and attitudinal factors shaping rural students' experiences with English acquisition, offering practical recommendations for educators and policymakers.

Keywords: Student' attitude, EFL, Rural area.

1 Introduction

The significance of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education has increased substantially around the world, particularly in nations where English is not the primary language [1]. Students in rural areas often encounter distinct challenges in their EFL learning compared to those in urban settings. Gaining an understanding of the factors that motivate rural students to study EFL and their attitudes toward the language can provide essential insights for educators and policymakers striving to improve EFL education outcomes in rural schools.

English is widely recognized as the predominant language for international communication, business, academia, technology, and popular culture. Proficiency in English is essential for accessing higher education, employment opportunities, and engaging in the global economy [2]. In many countries where English is not the primary language, it is taught as a compulsory subject starting from primary school. In Indonesia, English has been recognized as the first foreign language and a required school subject since independence, with students beginning their

studies in the fourth grade. However, the quality of English instruction varies greatly, especially in rural regions [3]. Various challenges, such as deficiencies in the national curriculum, limited exposure to authentic English usage, inadequately trained educators, and scarce resources, hinder rural students from acquiring strong English language skills, which subsequently affects their performance on national exams and limits their access to higher education [4].

Students' attitudes defined as their evaluative beliefs about learning English play a vital role in shaping their educational experiences. The socio-educational model suggests that attitudes influence motivation, whereas other studies propose a reciprocal relationship [5]. Positive attitudes, marked by enjoyment of language learning and favorable perceptions of the target language community, are thought to bolster motivation.

1.1 Problems Found in the Research

Rural area theory explores how factors such as geographic isolation, low population density, reliance on agriculture, strong local cultural identities, and limited resources influence educational experiences and outcomes in rural communities. This viewpoint underscores the distinct challenges and opportunities that arise in teaching and learning within rural environments, highlighting the necessity for tailored strategies that promote equity and social justice [6].

Initial data collection at SMPN 1 Sawit Seberang included assessing the attitudes of three eighth-grade students toward learning English through questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. These preliminary findings will inform the development of more robust research instruments and guide the research questions and hypotheses for the main study.

Despite the existing body of research, there are still notable gaps. There is a scarcity of studies utilizing longitudinal designs to examine shifts in attitudes over time, comparisons of rural students across various countries, or evaluations of the effects of interventions aimed at improving EFL attitudes and outcomes. Filling these gaps will lead to a clearer understanding of the attitudinal challenges faced by rural EFL learners and the strategies necessary to support them effectively.

In today's increasingly globalized environment, English language proficiency is vital for educational and career growth, especially for youth in rural areas. While rural EFL students often demonstrate instrumental attitudes toward the language, they also encounter obstacles such as low self-confidence and insufficient resources, which can result in heightened anxiety regarding their English learning experience. Future research and interventions addressing these challenges are essential to enhance EFL education and broaden opportunities for rural students [7].

This study aims to deepen the understanding of EFL attitudes among rural students in Indonesia, specifically focusing on SMP Negeri 1 Sawit Seberang in Kecamatan Sawit Seberang, Kabupaten Langkat. By exploring the perspectives of rural students on learning English, this research aspires to enhance English language education and promote equity for rural youth in Indonesia.

The study specifically looked at the following questions:

1. What are the factors affecting students' attitudes in learning English in rural areas?

2. How is students' attitude described in learning English in rural areas?
3. Why do students' attitudes manifest in learning English at SMPN 1 Sawit Seberang?

Research offers valuable insights into the attitudes of rural students towards learning English, revealing both variations across different contexts and some common themes. In Poland, [8] discovered that rural high school students generally held moderately positive attitudes toward English, but they suggested that teaching methods should be enhanced to make English lessons more enjoyable and relevant. Similarly, a study by [9] in Cameroon found that rural high school students expressed moderate positive attitudes toward English; however, many remained uncertain in their evaluations. Those who viewed English as a pathway to opportunities outside their villages demonstrated the most favorable attitudes.

In South Korea, [10] noted that while rural students recognized the significance of English, they faced greater challenges with confidence, anxiety, and discomfort when using the language compared to their urban counterparts. This lower self-assurance, coupled with their relatively weaker English proficiency, was seen as a barrier to achieving their college and career aspirations.

In conclusion, while rural students in various contexts acknowledge the importance of English as a key to opportunities, they often struggle with lower confidence and exhibit uncertain and anxious attitudes toward learning and using the language. Limited exposure and proficiency appear to significantly influence these mixed feelings.

2 Literature Review

This literature review explores the existing studies on attitudes and their effects on language learning, with a particular emphasis on English as a Foreign Language (EFL). It compiles research that illustrates the relationship between students' attitudes and their success in language acquisition. By examining both positive and negative attitudes and their implications for EFL instruction, the review seeks to elucidate how these elements affect language learning outcomes. Furthermore, it discusses the unique obstacles faced by EFL learners in Indonesia, taking into account the sociocultural factors that influence their educational journeys and results.

2.1 Attitude

In rural educational environments, cultivating positive attitudes towards language learning is crucial for effective acquisition and proficiency. Students who hold positive attitudes tend to approach language tasks with enthusiasm and curiosity, often motivated by an integrative perspective that reflects a genuine interest in the language and its culture. This integrative perspective helps students connect with English-speaking communities, thereby increasing their engagement and practical application of the language [11].

Additionally, positive attitudes are associated with stronger beliefs in self-efficacy, which enable learners to set ambitious goals and persist through difficulties. This growth mindset is especially important in rural contexts, where students may encounter distinct challenges in language learning [12]. Furthermore, positive attitudes contribute to a nurturing learning environment, encouraging students to take risks and engage meaningfully with their peers and

teachers [13]. Ultimately, promoting a positive attitude among students at SMPN 1 Sawit Seberang can significantly improve their experiences and outcomes in learning English.

Attitudes are shaped by personal experiences, social influences, education, and culture. In education, attitudes play a crucial role because they can affect students' motivation, engagement, and success in learning. For instance, a positive attitude encourages students to be more active and enthusiastic about learning, while a negative attitude can hinder their progress. Therefore, fostering positive attitudes is an essential aspect of education and learning.

2.1.1 Positive Attitude

Positive attitudes play a crucial role in creating an environment that supports effective language acquisition and proficiency. Learners who possess positive attitudes approach language-related tasks with enthusiasm and curiosity. An integrative attitude, which is a facet of positive attitudes, indicates a sincere interest in the language and its culture. This drive encourages learners to connect with native speakers, understand their traditions, and immerse themselves in the linguistic community, leading to active participation and practice [11].

Positive attitudes are essential for improving effective language learning and the development of language proficiency. These attitudes significantly contribute to cultivating genuine interest and intrinsic motivation among students. [12] emphasize that teachers who express enthusiasm for their subject can ignite similar excitement in their students, thereby enhancing the overall learning experience. When learners engage in language learning with intrinsic motivation, they are more likely to overcome challenges, perceive setbacks as opportunities for growth, and commit to mastering the language in the long run. This enthusiasm fosters a positive feedback loop where satisfaction from achievements drives further progress [14].

Additionally, positive attitudes enhance learners' beliefs in their own capabilities. Students who are confident in their ability to succeed are more likely to set high goals, exert effort, and persevere despite difficulties. This growth mindset, as highlighted by [15], helps learners recognize that language proficiency is a skill acquired through practice and effort, not merely a natural talent. As a result, they approach language learning with confidence and resilience, which increases their chances of success [5].

Moreover, creating a collaborative and supportive learning environment is crucial for fostering positive attitudes. When students feel encouraged to take risks, learn from their mistakes, and engage actively with peers and instructors, it results in a nurturing atmosphere. This supportive setting encourages constructive feedback, teamwork, and a sense of belonging within the learning community [7]. [8] points out that such environments promote mutual respect, empathy, and appreciation for linguistic diversity, all of which are vital for establishing an inclusive space where all learners can thrive.

In summary, positive attitudes are critical for advancing effective language learning and proficiency development. By fostering genuine interest, intrinsic motivation, self-efficacy, and a supportive atmosphere, educators can assist learners in achieving their language goals and opening doors for personal and professional growth [2]. Prioritizing these positive experiences in language education not only enhances student outcomes but also prepares them to navigate the challenges of a global landscape, especially in the context of the rapidly evolving industrial era.

A positive attitude is defined as an optimistic outlook or response toward situations, experiences, or others. It is characterized by enthusiasm, interest, and strong confidence, encouraging individuals to face challenges with courage and openness. In an educational context, a positive attitude contributes to active engagement in learning, boosts motivation, and enhances self-confidence. Individuals with a positive attitude are more likely to set and achieve goals while creating a supportive environment for healthy social interactions.

2.1.2 Negative Attitude

On the other hand, negative attitudes towards learning English can significantly hinder progress, particularly in rural settings. Students may show reluctance, disinterest, or even resistance towards language tasks, often due to language anxiety a common issue marked by feelings of fear and discomfort during language-related activities. This anxiety frequently results in avoidance behaviors, such as not participating in speaking exercises or class discussions, which greatly restricts their opportunities for practice and language acquisition [16].

Furthermore, negative attitudes can diminish students' self-efficacy and confidence. In rural areas, where educational resources and opportunities are often limited, students tend to adopt a fixed mindset, viewing language proficiency as a natural talent rather than a skill that can be developed through practice and effort [15]. This bleak perspective can lead to self-sabotaging behaviors and a lack of engagement in learning. Additionally, a negative attitude towards language education can create a detrimental classroom atmosphere, filled with frustration and disinterest, which ultimately undermines students' engagement and success [17].

Negative attitudes are pessimistic views or responses to situations, experiences, or people. These attitudes are marked by reluctance, disinterest, and low self-confidence, which can prevent individuals from facing challenges and reduce their motivation to learn or participate in activities.

In education, negative attitudes can disrupt learning and hinder students' success. For instance, negative attitudes towards learning English can particularly affect progress in rural areas. Students may show reluctance or resistance, often due to language anxiety, which leads to avoidance behaviors that limit their practice and language acquisition opportunities.

This negative outlook can also lower self-efficacy and confidence, making students believe that language proficiency is a natural talent rather than a skill developed through effort. Ultimately, such attitudes create a discouraging classroom environment, negatively impacting student engagement and success.

2.2 English as a Foreign Language (EFL)

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) refers to the process through which non-native speakers learn English in contexts where it is not the primary language. In Indonesia, where English instruction starts in the fourth grade, students encounter considerable challenges due to limited exposure and practice opportunities, particularly in rural areas like SMPN 1 Sawit Seberang [18].

The differences in educational quality between urban and rural institutions further complicate this situation. Rural schools frequently face challenges related to a lack of access to qualified educators and resources, which directly impacts the effectiveness of EFL teaching [19]. This

disparity can result in lower levels of English proficiency among rural students, perpetuating socio-economic inequalities [20]. Additionally, the prevalent focus on rote memorization in public education, driven by the pressure of high-stakes national assessments, often leads to a curriculum that overlooks essential communication skills vital for successful language acquisition [21].

According to Mbakop and Willy (2023), understanding the attitudes toward learning English as a foreign language is crucial in contexts like Cameroon, where similar challenges exist. They argue that positive attitudes toward language learning can significantly enhance students' motivation and engagement, ultimately leading to improved language proficiency. Their findings suggest that fostering a supportive and positive learning environment can help students overcome anxiety and resistance toward English, enabling them to participate more actively in language activities.

Rao [2] highlights the importance of social and educational models in understanding second language acquisition. He emphasizes that learners' attitudes and beliefs about language learning play a critical role in their success. [11] supports this view by outlining a socio-educational model that connects attitudes, motivation, and language learning outcomes. This model posits that positive attitudes towards the English language and its speakers can enhance learners' intrinsic motivation, thereby improving their language acquisition process.

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) refers to the process by which non-native speakers learn English in countries where it is not the primary language. EFL is typically taught in schools or educational institutions, focusing on the development of speaking, listening, reading, and writing skills.

In conclusion, it is vital to comprehend the factors influencing students' attitudes towards learning English at SMPN 1 Sawit Seberang to tackle the challenges they encounter. Positive attitudes can greatly improve their learning experiences and outcomes, while negative attitudes can impede their progress. Addressing these fundamental issues and creating a nurturing learning environment is essential for enhancing English proficiency in rural settings.

3 Method

The research adopts a qualitative, explanatory approach that incorporates questionnaires, interviews, and observations to explore the factors affecting students' attitudes toward learning English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in the rural context of SMP 1 Sawit Seberang. This particular school was selected due to its rural characteristics, including geographic isolation, a smaller student population, reliance on agriculture, and inadequate infrastructure.

A purposive sampling method, as described by Sugiyono [22], was employed to choose 30 eighth-grade students with diverse attitudes, genders, and ages. This approach enables a thorough understanding of the students' perspectives regarding English language learning. The eighth grade was selected because, according to [23] and Piaget's theory, students at this developmental stage undergo considerable cognitive and social growth, which influences their learning strategies. Furthermore, the curriculum at this level necessitates a higher degree of English proficiency, making it pertinent to this study.

Observational techniques are utilized to gather data on student behaviors, interactions, and the overall learning environment. This involves observing student engagement during English classes and related extracurricular activities to gain insights into how they engage with English language learning in their everyday experiences. The observations will concentrate on classroom interactions, teaching methods, and identifiable trends.

The data collection tools include a questionnaire written in Bahasa Indonesia, comprising 10 closed-ended questions using a 5-point Likert scale to assess students' attitudes toward learning English. This format is designed for clarity, reliability, and ease of analysis.

In addition, semi-structured interviews featuring open-ended questions were conducted to obtain qualitative insights into the students' attitudes. These interviews were also conducted in Bahasa Indonesia to facilitate clear communication and were audio-recorded for precision, in line with the guidelines of [24] and [25].

4 Result and Discussion

4.1 The Analysis of Students' responses for the Questionnaire

This section analyzes the factors affecting Grade 8 students' attitudes toward learning English as a foreign language. Data were collected via a questionnaire and evaluated using both quantitative and qualitative methods. Students rated each factor's influence on their attitude using a 5-point Likert scale: Strongly Agree (5), Agree (4), No Opinion (3), Disagree (2), and Strongly Disagree (1) for negative statements. Responses of 5 and 4 indicate a positive attitude, with the total percentage of students who agreed or strongly agreed reflecting those with a positive outlook. For further clarity, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Questionnaire Analysis

No.	Statement	Scale	Students' Response Frequency	Percentage (%)	
1	Learning English is important for my future opportunities.	Strongly Agree	9	30%	
		Agree	7	23.3%	
		No Opinion	5	16.7%	
		Disagree	6	20%	
		Strongly Disagree	3	10%	
		Total		30 students	
		Mean		3.4	
2	My family supports and encourages my English language learning.	Strongly Agree	5	16.7%	
		Agree	7	23.3%	
		No Opinion	10	33.3%	
		Disagree	5	16.7%	
		Strongly Disagree	3	10%	
		Total		30 students	
		Mean		3.2	

3	I feel motivated to practice English outside of the classroom environment.	Strongly Agree	7	23.3%
		Agree	8	26.7%
		No Opinion	5	16.7%
		Disagree	4	13.3%
		Strongly Disagree	6	20%
		Total	30 students	
	Mean	3.2		
4	The availability of English language resources (e.g., books, internet) in my rural area affects my attitude to learn English.	Strongly Agree	5	16.7%
		Agree	5	16.7%
		No Opinion	7	23.3%
		Disagree	8	26.7%
		Strongly Disagree	5	16.7%
		Total	30 students	
	Mean	3.0		
5	I enjoy participating in English language activities or clubs at school.	Strongly Agree	9	30%
		Agree	7	23.3%
		No Opinion	4	13.3%
		Disagree	5	16.7%
		Strongly Disagree	5	16.7%
		Total	30 students	
	Mean	3.3		
6	Learning English can provide me with better job opportunities in my rural community.	Strongly Agree	10	33.3%
		Agree	8	26.7%
		No Opinion	3	10%
		Disagree	7	23.3%
		Strongly Disagree	2	6.7%
		Total	30 students	
	Mean	3.6		
7	I feel confident in my English language skills.	Strongly Agree	5	16.7%
		Agree	4	13.3%
		No Opinion	3	10%
		Disagree	10	33.3%
		Strongly Disagree	8	26.7%
		Total	30 students	
	Mean	2.5		
8	English language proficiency plays a role in preserving and promoting my cultural heritage.	Strongly Agree	7	23.3%
		Agree	9	30%
		No Opinion	5	16.7%
		Disagree	6	20%
		Strongly Disagree	3	10%
		Total	30 students	

	Mean		3.4	
9	My teachers' enthusiasm and teaching methods impact my attitude to learn English.	Strongly	10	33.3%
		Agree		
		Agree	7	23.3%
		No Opinion	3	10%
		Disagree	5	16.7%
		Strongly Disagree	5	16.7%
	Total		30 students	
	Mean		3.4	
10	Overall, I am satisfied with the English language learning opportunities provided at my school.	Strongly	7	23.3%
		Agree		
		Agree	8	26.7%
		No Opinion	3	10%
		Disagree	7	23.3%
		Strongly Disagree	5	16.7%
	Total		30 students	
	Mean		2.9	

This section investigates the elements influencing Grade 8 students' attitudes towards learning English as a foreign language, based on their survey feedback.

A substantial number of students acknowledge the value of English for their futures, with 30% strongly affirming and 23.3% agreeing with the statement, "Learning English is important for my future opportunities." This suggests that more than half recognize the significance of English proficiency. However, 16.7% were neutral, and 30% disagreed (20% disagreed and 10% strongly disagreed), indicating that some students might not fully understand the practical benefits of English.

Support from family plays a critical role in language acquisition. When asked if "My family supports and encourages my English language learning," only 16.7% strongly agreed, and 23.3% agreed, indicating that roughly 40% feel some level of familial support. Conversely, 33.3% had no opinion, and 26.7% disagreed (16.7% disagreed and 10% strongly disagreed), revealing that many students lack substantial encouragement from their families.

Students show differing levels of motivation to practice English outside the classroom. In response to whether they feel motivated to use English beyond school, 23.3% strongly agreed and 26.7% agreed, suggesting nearly half maintain a favorable attitude towards practicing English in informal settings. However, 16.7% remained neutral, while 33.3% disagreed (13.3% disagreed and 20% strongly disagreed), indicating a lack of integrative motivation among some.

The availability of learning resources significantly impacts students' attitudes. When questioned about the effect of resource access (like books and the internet) in their rural environments, 16.7% strongly agreed and another 16.7% agreed, indicating that about one-third consider resource availability essential. However, 23.3% were neutral, and a large 43.4% disagreed or strongly disagreed, suggesting that resource limitations may not significantly discourage many students' motivation.

Engagement in English-related extracurricular activities also affects student involvement. When asked about their enjoyment of English activities or clubs, 30% strongly agreed, and 23.3%

agreed, showing that over half find these activities appealing. Nonetheless, 13.3% were neutral, and 50% disagreed (16.7% disagreed and 33.4% strongly disagreed), indicating a need for more inclusive and stimulating opportunities.

Students generally hold positive views about job opportunities associated with English proficiency. Regarding the statement, "Learning English can provide me with better job opportunities in my rural community," 33.3% strongly agreed, and 26.7% agreed, implying that 60% view English as advantageous for their careers. However, 10% had no opinion, while 30% disagreed (23.3% disagreed and 6.7% strongly disagreed), reflecting a spectrum of opinions on the vocational relevance of English.

Another area of concern is students' confidence in their English abilities. Only 16.7% strongly agreed, and 13.3% agreed with the statement, "I feel confident in my English language skills." In contrast, 33.3% disagreed, and 26.7% strongly disagreed, highlighting a significant lack of confidence that may negatively influence their attitude towards learning.

Cultural motivations are also influential. In response to the statement, "English language proficiency plays a role in preserving and promoting my cultural heritage," 23.3% strongly agreed, and 30% agreed, indicating that over half appreciate English for its cultural relevance. However, 16.7% were neutral, and 30% disagreed or strongly disagreed, suggesting that not all students feel a cultural connection to learning English.

The enthusiasm and methods of teachers greatly affect student motivation. For the statement, "My teachers' enthusiasm and teaching methods impact my motivation to learn English," 33.3% strongly agreed, and 23.3% agreed, emphasizing the importance of teaching quality. Nevertheless, 10% had no opinion, and 50% disagreed (16.7% disagreed and 16.7% strongly disagreed), indicating a need for improved teaching strategies.

Lastly, students' overall satisfaction with English learning opportunities in school is moderate. When asked about their contentment with the learning opportunities provided, 23.3% strongly agreed, and 26.7% agreed, reflecting a certain level of satisfaction. However, 10% were neutral, while 40% disagreed or strongly disagreed, indicating a substantial need for enhancements in the quality of English language education available in their school.

The mean value can be further clarified through Figure 1. as follows.

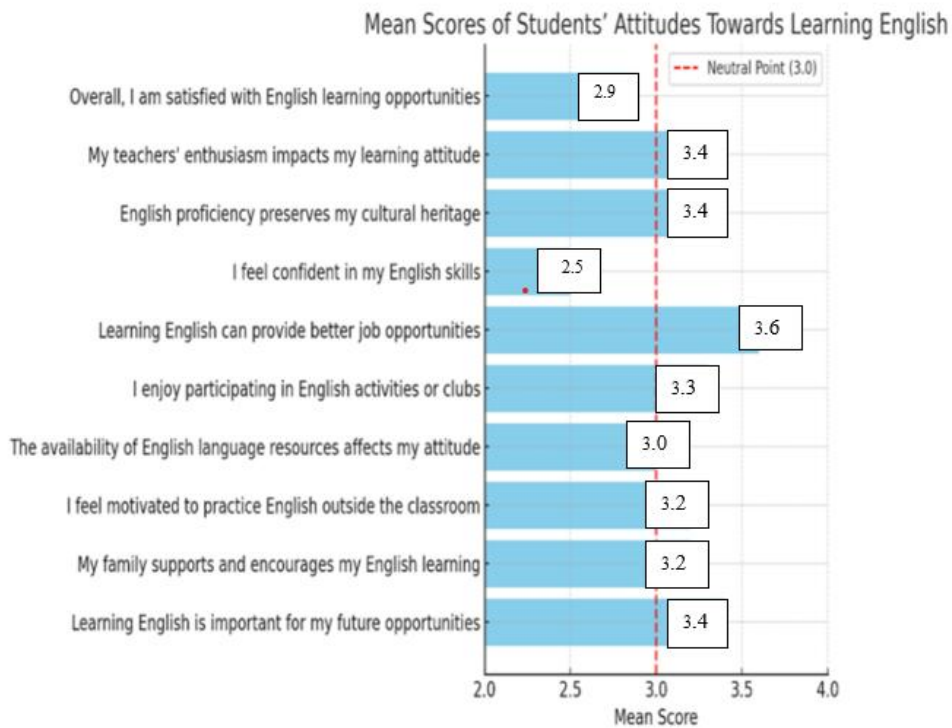


Fig. 1. Student Perspectives on English Learning: A Mean Score Analysis

The survey results show that Grade 8 students generally have a positive view of learning English, with a mean score of 3.4 for the statement, "Learning English is important for my future opportunities." This indicates that they recognize the significance of English in today's global society. However, their perceived family support for learning English is moderate, reflected in a mean score of 3.2, suggesting that family encouragement plays a role in their motivation.

Students show a moderate willingness to practice English outside the classroom, with a mean score of 3.2, which can help their language skills. Their perceptions of the availability of English resources in their rural area are neutral, scoring 3.0, indicating that they don't see this as a major barrier or benefit.

Additionally, students enjoy participating in English activities at school, scoring 3.3, which is important for creating a positive learning environment. They also believe that English proficiency can lead to better job opportunities in their community, reflected in a strong mean score of 3.6.

Conversely, their confidence in their English skills is low, with a mean score of 2.5, highlighting the need for more support and skill development to improve their self-esteem. They recognize a link between English proficiency and cultural heritage, scoring 3.4 in this area.

Moreover, students view their teachers' enthusiasm and teaching methods positively, also scoring 3.4, suggesting that effective teaching can significantly boost their motivation to learn English. However, their overall satisfaction with English learning opportunities at school is slightly below neutral, with a mean score of 2.9, indicating that while they find some value in these opportunities, improvements are needed.

In summary, the average scores suggest that Grade 8 students have a generally optimistic attitude toward learning English, especially regarding its importance for future opportunities. However, there are key areas to address, particularly in enhancing student confidence and improving access to resources, to create a more effective and enriching learning environment

4.2 Findings

4.2.1. What are the factors affecting students' attitudes toward learning English in rural areas?

The analysis identifies several key factors that significantly impact students' attitudes toward learning English. One prominent factor is parental influence; many students, such as Student 2, express a strong motivation to learn English due to their parents' beliefs in its importance for future opportunities. This highlights the role of familial support in shaping positive attitudes. Additionally, peer dynamics play a crucial role in students' perceptions. For instance, Student 5 notes that while some friends are enthusiastic about learning English, many view it as unimportant, creating mixed attitudes that can either inspire or demotivate individual learners.

Access to resources is another significant factor; students indicate that the lack of English learning materials, such as books and internet connectivity, negatively impacts their motivation, as highlighted by Student 7. However, some students, like Student 8, find ways to access materials online, demonstrating that resourcefulness can mitigate certain limitations. Furthermore, a supportive learning environment contributes to positive attitudes toward English. Positive experiences with teachers and extracurricular activities, such as English clubs or drama, can foster enthusiasm and motivation, as exemplified by Student 25. In contrast, negative experiences, such as feeling embarrassed by teachers, as noted by Student 21, can lead to decreased motivation.

Finally, students expressed mixed feelings about the cultural relevance of English to their identities. While some, like Student 16, view English as a means to share their cultural heritage globally, others, such as Student 17, do not see a connection between English and their local customs. These factors collectively shape the complex attitudes of students toward learning English.

4.2.2. How do students describe their attitudes toward learning English in rural areas?

The attitudes of students toward learning English can be categorized into positive and negative orientations. On the positive side, a substantial number of students (53.3%) reported enjoying English activities and recognized the potential for better job prospects (60%). This indicates an appreciation for English as a valuable skill that can contribute to personal and economic development. Many students view English as an opportunity to connect with broader cultural narratives and enhance their community's prospects, as illustrated by the sentiments of Student 13.

In contrast, a significant portion of students (60%) expressed low self-efficacy regarding their English skills, highlighting a challenge in their learning journey. Additionally, many students conveyed a lack of interest or perceived relevance of English to their daily lives in the rural setting. Qualitative data reveals sentiments such as, “I don’t see the need for it,” and “Most of my friends see learning English as a chore,” indicating a sense of apathy or resistance toward learning the language. These contrasting attitudes reflect the complexities of student engagement with English learning, influenced by both recognition of its value and feelings of disconnection.

4.2.3. Why do the students hold these attitudes?

The attitudes of students towards learning English are influenced by a mix of internal and external factors. A significant aspect is the difference between instrumental and integrative motivation. Many students are motivated by practical benefits, like job prospects, which falls under instrumental motivation. In contrast, those who value the cultural and integrative elements of English, such as the opportunity to express their heritage, tend to show more enthusiasm for the language.

Moreover, self-image and confidence are critical in shaping students' perceptions. Numerous students have voiced worries about their English skills; those who participate in activities that enhance their confidence generally report more favorable attitudes toward learning. In contrast, students with self-doubt often have negative experiences related to their education.

The wider sociocultural environment also plays a vital role in shaping students' perceptions of English. For some, acquiring English skills offers a gateway to a broader world, creating opportunities for engagement beyond their immediate surroundings. However, others view it as irrelevant to their community's current needs, prioritizing local economic pursuits instead.

Lastly, the quality of educational experiences significantly influences students' attitudes. Dynamic and interactive teaching methods tend to promote positive learning attitudes, while conventional and dull approaches may result in disinterest and reduced motivation. Together, these elements highlight the intricate relationship between personal motivations, social contexts, and educational methods in shaping students' attitudes toward English learning.

In summary, the analysis reveals a complex interplay of factors influencing Grade 8 students' attitudes toward learning English in a rural context. While there are notable positive dispositions driven by aspirations for better opportunities and familial support, significant challenges persist, including lack of resources, negative self-perceptions, and perceived irrelevance of the language to local contexts. Addressing these challenges through enhanced resource availability, training for educators, and promoting the cultural relevance of English may help foster more positive attitudes and outcomes for students in rural areas.

4.3 Discussion

The analysis of student responses reveals a multifaceted perspective on attitudes toward learning English in rural environments, influenced by individual aspirations, social dynamics, and the availability of resources. Remarkably, 53.3% of students report enjoying English activities, and 60% believe that English proficiency can improve job prospects. This indicates that many perceive English as an essential skill for both personal and economic advancement. Positive

attitudes toward English flourish in supportive settings, facilitated by effective teaching methods and a solid understanding of the advantages of English proficiency, aligning with Gardner's motivation theory. In contrast, negative attitudes often stem from feelings of irrelevance, lack of support, and inadequate resources. This intricate situation is consistent with findings from similar research in rural areas of India, Morocco, China, and Palestine [26][27][28][9], emphasizing common themes such as instrumental motivation and the acknowledgment of English's practical importance, while also highlighting motivational variations, particularly the focus on maintaining local heritage pertinent to the specific context.

While more than half of the students indicated genuine enjoyment in learning English, many also conveyed low self-efficacy regarding their capabilities. This finding contrasts with previous studies that reported more positive self-beliefs [29], suggesting that contextual challenges may influence rural perspectives. Feelings of anxiety and negative self-assessment identified in this study resonate with earlier research [14][30]. However, the complex nature of attitude ambivalence where students feel conflicted about the significance of English in relation to their identities has received limited attention in past studies.

Peer influence and teacher involvement are crucial in shaping students' attitudes. Motivated peers can enhance the learning experience, whereas negative peer interactions can undermine motivation, reflecting Dörnyei's theories on social interactions. Additionally, students emphasized how their teachers' enthusiasm and teaching techniques significantly affect their attitudes, suggesting that effective instructional practices can cultivate a passion for English.

To improve the attitudes of Grade 8 students toward learning English in rural settings, several essential strategies must be implemented. First, fostering supportive learning environments that encourage practice can boost students' confidence and alleviate anxiety. Second, incorporating local cultural aspects into the curriculum can render the learning experience more relevant and inspiring. Third, enhancing access to learning materials and online resources is crucial for effective language acquisition. Finally, involving families in recognizing the significance of English and how they can assist their children's learning can help create a supportive home atmosphere.

By addressing these factors, educators can markedly improve students' attitudes and experiences in learning English, ultimately aiding their personal and economic development. The findings underscore the necessity of a holistic approach that takes into account the interaction of individual motivations, social influences, and contextual challenges in rural educational settings. Overall, the report reinforces that over 50% of students express genuine enjoyment in learning English, which aligns with Gardner's theories and is supported by earlier studies [31]

5 Conclusion

The analysis of Grade 8 students' attitudes toward learning English in a rural context reveals several factors that shape their perceptions and experiences. While many students acknowledge the importance of English for their future prospects, they face challenges that hinder their engagement with the language. Low self-confidence in their English skills, varying levels of family support, and limited access to educational resources are key issues that affect their learning journey.

Positive attitudes toward English are often fueled by personal aspirations, such as the desire for higher education and better job opportunities, along with encouragement from family and peers. Students perceive English as a vital tool for navigating an increasingly interconnected world. Furthermore, effective teaching methods and engaging extracurricular activities significantly enhance their motivation and involvement in learning. Conversely, negative attitudes frequently stem from a perceived lack of relevance of English in their rural environment, insufficient family support, and inadequate resources. Many students struggle to find motivation, compounded by negative classroom experiences and unengaging teaching approaches.

To improve students' attitudes toward learning English, educators and institutions can implement several targeted strategies. Schools can develop programs to engage parents, informing them about the importance of English and how they can support their children through workshops and informational sessions. Enhancing access to English learning materials, both physical and digital, will also enable students to engage more effectively with the language. Additionally, encouraging participation in English-related extracurricular activities, such as clubs and creative arts, can provide students with enjoyable opportunities to practice their skills.

Professional development for teachers is crucial; ongoing training in innovative teaching techniques can make the learning experience more engaging and relatable. Furthermore, implementing confidence-building initiatives, such as structured speaking activities and positive reinforcement, can help alleviate feelings of embarrassment and fear of making mistakes. Finally, emphasizing the cultural significance of English and integrating local culture into lessons can foster a more relatable learning environment.

By addressing these challenges and implementing these strategies, educators can cultivate a more positive attitude toward English learning among Grade 8 students in rural areas. This approach not only aids students in acquiring essential language skills but also enhances their overall engagement and success in a globalized world, effectively preparing them for future opportunities.

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