

BUILDING TRUST IN UNIVERSITY-LEVEL ENGLISH LANGUAGE EDUCATION IN INDONESIA: A MIXED METHODS STUDY

Suryanto Suryanto

English Language Education Department, Faculty of Language Education, Universitas Muhammadiyah Yogyakarta, Indonesia

Email: suryanto@umy.ac.id

APA Citation: Suryanto, S. (2024). Building trust in university-level English language education in Indonesia: A mixed methods study. *Indonesian Journal Learning and Instruction*, 7(1), 13-22. 10.25134/ijli.v7i1.9543

Received: 19-12-2023

Accepted: 21-02-2024

Published: 30-04-2024

Abstract: Trust in others is shown when an individual is prepared to prioritize their well-being without considering potential risks, driven by their unwavering belief in the moral integrity of others. The research investigates the degree of trust between students and teachers in English language instruction. It examines the underlying factors contributing to this trust and investigate the strategies teachers and students use to establish trust. The researcher used a mixed methods approach by integrating questionnaires and interviews to gather data for this study. The surveys were provided to 265 students using convenient sampling, while the interviews were purposefully conducted with ten lecturers and 18 students. The researcher used descriptive statistics to analyze the data obtained from the questionnaire. Given that 63.7 % of students express trust in their instructors, the findings suggest that the degree of trust between students and professors is typically positive in the context of university-level English instruction. The interview data were examined using open, axial, and selective coding techniques. The study's findings indicate a reciprocal trust between students and teachers, with students demonstrating a solid foundation for this trust. In response, lecturers possess effective strategies for cultivating students' trust. This work is significant because it advances the understanding of relationships in educational settings, improves classroom practices, and informs policy decisions to establish more motivating and effective learning environments.

Keywords: *trust; trust between students and teachers building; trust in English language teaching.*

INTRODUCTION

Within the ever-evolving and intricate realm of education, trust plays a crucial role in influencing the interactions and outcomes of student-teacher engagement, especially in the process of English language instruction. Trust is a complex concept that is often understood as a tendency of people to exhibit vulnerability, driven by optimistic anticipations about the intentions or conduct of others (Hussain et al., 2021; Hyndman et al., 2021; Kmiecik, 2020).

Trust is defined variedly across specialists. According to Chiou and Lee (2023) and Spadaro et al. (2020), the emergence of trust may be traced back to essential characteristics of human social life when individuals rely on others to participate in cooperative interactions. They examine the process by which the concept of trust acquires implications of optimism and danger and how individuals use it in comparable but separate situations. Trust is illustrated in the form of the tendency of one entity as a trustor to expose themselves to the activities of another entity (known as the trustee) with the anticipation that the latter will carry out a definite deed that grasps consequence for the former, regardless of the

trustor's capacity to oversee or regulate said party (Viola & Laidler, 2021) According to Zhang, (2021), there are two key variables to consider: the trustor's willingness to be involved in the action and the trustor's expectancy that the trustee would perform the deed. In this context, trust is the tendency to assume risks and the hope of the trustor that the trustee would effectively execute the assigned duty.

Trust to a trustee is enhanced once the trustee demonstrates trustworthiness, which is shown via the display of ability, benevolence, and integrity (Colquitt & Baer, 2023). For teachers, ability is one of the three notions that help them gain the trust of their students. Teachers must demonstrate expertise in their field, which entails possessing relevant works of knowledge and abilities. Students will only develop confidence in the teachers' ideas when they see them deserving severe consideration. Indeed, competence often varies depending on the relevant area (Colquitt & Baer, 2023; Svare et al., 2020).

Benevolence denotes to the degree to which a teacher demonstrates benevolence towards their students (Colquitt & Baer, 2023). Teachers show benevolence by providing a safe, respectful, and

inclusive classroom where every student feels appreciated. Teachers help students overcome problems by understanding their viewpoints and emotions. Enhancing student talents and potential with positive comments boosts confidence and motivation. Open-door regulations and customization help provide student accessibility and approachability, adapted to their various learning requirements and preferences. Teachers encourage persistence and a development mentality by seeing problems as opportunities. Their generosity, justice, and respect influence students' character development as role models. Collaborative learning improves results and community, while flexible deadlines and individualized assignments meet particular circumstances. Transparency about progress and expectations creates trust and reduces uncertainty. These techniques help teachers create a caring atmosphere that fosters students' intellectual, social, and emotional development (Colquitt & Baer, 2023; Svare et al., 2020).

The third component, integrity, measures a teacher's commitment to ethical and moral ideals, particularly dealing with fairness, justice, consistency, and promise fulfillment (Colquitt & Salam, 2009). When instructing the English language, a teacher demonstrates integrity by upholding ethical principles emphasizing honesty, fairness, and respect (Hossain et al., 2024). This is shown by providing honest feedback and evaluations, demonstrating respect for intellectual property via the instruction and implementation of appropriate citation practices to mitigate plagiarism, and exemplifying ethical conduct through punctuality and preparedness (Cutri et al., 2021). The teacher maintains high standards, recognizes and corrects mistakes, promotes inclusivity, and ensures equitable educational opportunities for all learners, fostering academic integrity. This methodology enriches the educational encounter and imbues learners with fundamental ethical ideals.

To establish trustworthiness to a trustee, a trustor needs a framework to assess their credibility. One of the media to assess is communication. When a trustor engages in extensive communication with the trustee, they can develop a substantial sense of trustworthiness (Besley & Dudo, 2022; Schilke et al., 2021). At this phase, the trustor possibly will accept an unsafe act to be a consequence of believing the trustee (Shayo et al., 2021). However, it should be noted that trust is not devoid of context (Dinesen et al., 2020). The degree of trust is influenced by

various related aspects, such as the individuals involved in the relationship, the level of power equality, the perception of risk by both the trustor and trustee and the presence of other positive attributes attributed to the trustee that the trustor may anticipate (Firmansyah et al., 2019). The establishment of relationship trust may be affected by aspects such as cultural background and the length of the relationship (Rheu et al., 2021). Additionally, gender can become a factor in determining the existence of trust (Mumu et al., 2022).

Trust plays a vital role in English instructional processes by enabling the teacher to manage the class effectively. It is a vital component of the classroom environment (Niedlich et al., 2021). The formation of a trusting bond has the possibility to enable students to engage in learning risks, even in the absence of immediate benefits (Demir, 2021; Niedlich et al., 2021). To cultivate trust in English language instructions, the teachers and students need to engage in didactic communication (Fooladi, 2020). This kind of communication, known as "swift trust," may be established via dialog or communication (Tong & Chan, 2022). A didactic communication fosters confidence in the teacher's competence, support, and fairness, preventing any potential abuse of students' trust (Tong & Chan, 2022).

Establishing trust between students and teachers in English language teaching significantly enhances educational processes and outcomes by creating a supportive, safe classroom environment that boosts student engagement, communication, and academic integrity (Jess, 2024; Kolley et al., 2021). Trust enables students to express themselves freely and take learning risks, leading to better educational results and providing emotional and social support, especially for ESL students (Platz, 2021; Van Eycken et al., 2023). Additionally, trust mitigates cultural and language barriers, reduces behavioral issues, and promotes innovative teaching methods (Gopalkrishnan, 2019). The presence of trust also lowers anxiety, improves teacher retention, and fosters a more inclusive and adaptable learning atmosphere (Cao & Yu, 2023; Hsu & Goldsmith, 2021; Kolley et al., 2021; Thornberg et al., 2022). Altogether, trust not only improves the learning experience but also addresses key challenges in student performance, engagement, and classroom dynamics.

Recent studies have increasingly highlighted the importance of trust in educational contexts, pointing to its significant impact on student

engagement, academic achievement, and classroom dynamics. However, while the significance of trust within the broader educational framework is well-documented, its specific role and dynamics within the context of English language instruction have received comparatively less attention. The researcher has not found any existing research on trust in the English instructional processes in Indonesia, prompting him to conduct this investigation. The main aims of conducting these inquiries are to assess the presence of trust, explore the factors contributing to students' trust in their teachers, and elucidate the mechanisms through which trust is established between students and teachers.

METHOD

This inquiry employed a mixed methods approach, which enables the simultaneous existence and combination of two distinct research methodologies throughout the analytic process. To gather the quantitative data, the researcher used a questionnaire, and employed an interview to obtain the qualitative data (Creswell, 2022; Creswell & Creswell, 2023).

In order to examine the dynamics of student-teacher interactions in building trust, a total of 265 students were included in administering a questionnaire survey. The sample was taken using convenience sampling to all students who learned English as their compulsory subject to learn in language training center at an Islamic Private University in Yogyakarta, Indonesia. The original Inventory of Teacher-Student Relationships (IT-SR) questionnaire was adapted from Murray & Zvoch (2011), which consists of 17 items. An Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) estimated the validity of the questionnaire constructs, grouped

into three factors: communication, trust, and alienation. Modifications were made to the questionnaires to adapt to the current contextual condition of undergraduate students by paraphrasing the item. For example, item 1 in the original questionnaire mentioned *My Teacher respects my feelings*. This item was paraphrased to be *My lecturer appreciates what I feel*. The study only used the questionnaire items to measure trust, which contained six items. Those items are item 1, 3, 11, 12, and 13 (See Table 1). When measuring the reliability, Cronbach's alpha coefficient of trust was 0.77, signifying that the questionnaire possessed relatively high reliability (Taber, 2018). Additionally, 18 students were taken randomly to those who participated in the questionnaire survey and ten lecturers were randomly selected from 51 lecturers in the center to engage in interviews.

After data collection, the quantitative data was prepared for analysis by eliminating mistakes caused by data input and missing data (Maharana et al., 2022). The data's normality was assessed to determine the feasibility of conducting the parametric test (Khatun, 2021; Orcan, 2020). The quantitative data was examined using descriptive statistics before integrating data interpretation into the parallel mixed method analysis. In order to examine the qualitative data, a thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2022) was conducted using open, axial, and selective coding techniques (Qureshi & Ünlü, 2020). The ethical issues that emerged from the implementation of this research were appropriately acknowledged and resolved, especially dealing with anonymity and credential information of participant data (Drolet et al., 2023).

Table 1. *The questionnaire item measuring trust between students and teachers*

Item	Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1	My lecturer appreciates what I feel.					
3	My lecturer accepts me unconditionally.					
11	I notice my lecturer as a competent educator.					
12	I have trust in my lecturer.					
13	My lecturer has trust in my autonomy.					

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Trust plays a crucial role in student-teacher interaction within the educational context (Amerstorfer & Freiin von Münster-Kistner,

2021; Waber et al., 2022). The analysis of the interview data suggests that the amount of trust shown by students towards their teachers is mainly adequate. This section provides a

comprehensive analysis of the data about trust and the mechanisms how students in this research establish trust in the interactions with their teachers.

The presence of trust

A thorough examination of the interview data reveals that students have a high level of trust in their teachers regarding their interactions in the English language instruction. The presence of trust between students and teachers was acknowledged by both parties involved. All interviewees expressed their trust in their English teacher; however, only five clearly indicated the extent of their trust. Students 3, 4, 6, 12, and 17 mentioned that their trust levels were respectively 96, 98, 99, 50, and 50 percent of their teachers. The teacher correspondingly provided information on the existence of trust in the interaction with their student, as shown in the following interview

result:

...a significant number of students place their trust in me to engage in conversations not just about the English language but also to seek guidance on their plans for the future, navigate the process of applying for scholarships, and address personal challenges about their love lives. (Teacher 5 interview)

The information provided suggests that some teachers exhibit openness and support towards their students, which is crucial for establishing trustworthiness (Rheu et al., 2021; Zhang, 2021). Table 2 indicates the quantitative data about students' trust. Item 12, which pertains to trust in the lecturer, exhibits that students perceive high trust in their lecturers. The data indicates that 69.2% of students possess a semi-high trust level to their teachers, while just 2.7% of students do not have one.

Table 2. *The students' trust in their teachers.*

Questionnaire items	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Total
1. The lecturer appreciates what I feel.	3.8	9.1	28.9	41.8	16.3	100.0
3. My lecturer accepts me unconditionally.	2.3	3.8	22.1	40.7	31.2	100.0
11. I notice my lecturer as a competent educator.	1.1	3.4	27.0	38.4	30.0	100.0
12. I have trust in my lecturer.	0.4	2.3	28.1	46.4	22.8	100.0
13. My lecturer has trust in my autonomy.	1.6	4.7	4.7	36.9	10.2	100.0
Total Average	1.84	4.66	30.56	40.84	22.1	1.84

Trust may be classified into three distinct stages: weak-form, semi-strong-form, and strong-form trust. Weak-form trust is characterized by trust that lacks consequences. On the other hand, semi-strong trust entails the possibility of reputational damage. On the other hand, strong-form trust is rooted in historical, cultural, belief, and value-based foundations. The trust in the connection between students and teachers in the sample of Indonesian students examined in this research may be classified as semi-strong trust.

One primary factor contributing to diminished trust is the susceptibility linked to the deterioration of one's reputation. Teachers who mistreat students by failing to provide sufficient instruction may face reputational damage from both students and university administration since teaching is evaluated after each semester, as stated by the following participant.

"I provide resolutions to their issues and address all of their inquiries. I diligently uphold my teaching methodologies. Subsequently, it becomes evident that students place their faith in me by their expressed intention to continue their studies with me in the subsequent semester and

through the distribution of teacher evaluation papers at the completion of each academic term." (Teacher 6 interview)

Another factor contributing to decreased levels of trust is the absence of historical, belief, and cultural connections between students and teachers, which might lead to a mutual duty to trust one another. Therefore, classifying this degree of confidence as strong-form trust is not suitable. Therefore, the trust between students and teachers might be classified as a semi-strong-form trust.

The total of quantitative data analysis indicates that 6.5 % students own no trust in their teachers, 30.56 % possess trust in a weak form, and 62.94 % exhibit trust in a semi-strong form. This investigation posits that trust poses little concern for the majority of students. The presence of trust is not without justification. Their interactive activities facilitate the establishment of trust in the student-teacher relationship (Amerstorfer & Freiin von Münster-Kistner, 2021; Kincade et al., 2020).

Reason for trusting the teachers

The qualitative data analysis reveals several factors contributing to the presentation of relational trust between students and their teachers in the context of language instruction. One primary factor is that students trust teachers due to seeing tangible progress after participating in a lesson. One participant said, "I trust my teachers due to the regularity of our biweekly class sessions, participation in an international class program, and attendance at English seminars, which consistently enhance my English proficiency. I have trust in my teachers due to their competence." (Student 3 interview)

The statement above suggests that the teachers exhibit helpful and competent conduct, enhancing students' English language proficiency. When students see the enhancement, they trust the teachers' ability to effectively facilitate their learning. The teachers have cultivated integrity and benevolence (Colquitt & Baer, 2023; Firmansyah et al., 2019; Spadaro et al., 2020; Svare et al., 2020).

One further factor students indicate as a basis for placing trust in their teacher is their ability to foster and facilitate their learning process. Through their engagement in authentic teaching methodologies, students see the advantages of the support and direction offered by their teachers, which may catalyze their drive to acquire knowledge. As a result, students' trust in the teachers increases. In the interview, Student 6 stated,

"I have trust for the teachers as I see their instructional methods. They are providing encouragement and guidance to enhance our proficiency in English." (Student 6 interview)

One further factor mentioned by students as a basis for establishing trust in their teachers is the perception that the teachers' statements are grounded in accurate information. Providing true information entails adhering to truthfulness and honesty, a crucial aspect of establishing trust (Shayo et al., 2021). Student 12 interview exemplifies the potential of truthfulness in fostering trust among students towards their teachers.

"Indeed, I have trust in my teachers since their statements align with reality, enabling us to acquire proficiency in the English language collectively." (Student 12 interview)

The third reason to have trust in the teachers is that they are consistent in the manner in which they teach their subjects. Two of the students responded when they were asked if they had trust

in their teachers when it comes to the instruction and comprehension of the English language.

"I place trust in my teachers due to our limited understanding of tenses since both the other students and I lack such knowledge. Upon the teachers' explanation, I comprehend the subject matter." (Student 18 interview)

"I have trusted my teacher. My teacher can facilitate my mastery of the English language due to their speech fluency, the comprehensibility of the quizzes they administer, and the clarity of their instructional delivery." (Student 9 interview)

In practice, the method by which teachers impart instruction indicates their pragmatic and individual proficiencies. The teaching methods used by the teachers in question demonstrate their competence and integrity (Firmansyah et al., 2019; Svare et al., 2020). Students have a solid foundation to trust teachers who possess competence and integrity since these qualities are considered essential for establishing trustworthiness (Breuer et al., 2020)

Establishing student-teacher trust

Trust is established via communication when instructing and learning the English language. The qualitative data analysis of teacher remarks revealed a quartet of behaviors that might contribute to establishing trust: identification, persuading students, offering solutions, and upholding effective teaching methods. The following data support these inferences

Identification. Initially, teachers see the students' hesitance to converse with them. When asked about the first steps to establish trust within a student-teacher relationship, a teacher responded:

"In the beginning, students experience doubt as they engage in conversation with an unfamiliar individual." (Teacher 2 interview)

During the identification stage, the students and teachers establish a mutual understanding and familiarity. Students have apprehensions about their teachers' suitability as a source of guidance for issues that impede their learning. There is an awareness of this problem in Teacher 2.

Convincing the students. The subsequent phase demonstrates the teacher's ability to persuade students to trust them, as shown by Teacher 3.

"During the first discussion, I typically assured them that if they choose to communicate with me, I would maintain strict confidentiality and refrain

from sharing any information about the issue they are facing with others.”(Teacher 3 interview)

The teacher's promise to maintain secrecy might serve as a foundation for a safe environment in which students feel comfortable confiding in the teachers about their issues. The process of establishing confidence does not end here; it continues with the teacher offering solutions to students' problems.

Offering solutions. The teacher also elaborated on his approach of offering solutions to students. Teacher 6 expressed his view.

“I provide resolutions to their issues and address all of their inquiries. I diligently uphold my teaching techniques. Subsequently, it becomes evident that students place their trust in me by their expressed intention to continue their studies with me in the subsequent semester and through the distribution of teacher evaluation papers at the end of each academic term.” (Teacher 6 interview)

Several studies supports that the teacher method of problem-solving and responding to questions fosters trust among students for several reasons. Firstly, an educator who is responsive and supportive demonstrates a dedication to the learning of each student, enhancing accessibility and dependability. Dependability assures consistent and reliable performance of the system, while accessibility guarantees that any user can avail themselves of the service. Collectively, these aspects contribute to a favourable user experience that strengthens trust (Muliadi et al., 2022). Secondly, students place their trust in their teachers and persist in their learning due to his expertise and aptitude for problem-solving. In this respect, students compliment his effective teaching tactics, which demonstrates their trust in the teachers.

Upholding effective teaching practices. Teachers use several strategies to establish trust with students, including answering their issues, addressing inquiries, and upholding effective teaching practices (Koslouski & Stark, 2021; Platz, 2021). These methods align with students' perceptions, indicating that the teacher's teaching style influences students' trust in teachers.

CONCLUSION

This research provides a complete analysis of trust in the context of English language instruction in Indonesia. It successfully elucidates trust's complex and essential role in the relationship between students and their teachers. The study demonstrates a semi high level of trust

among students, with 62.94 % expressing trust in their teachers. This is achieved by carefully combining quantitative and qualitative data collected through surveys and interviews.

The research findings indicate that trust is a mutually influential phenomenon intricately intertwined with the dynamics of relationships within the educational setting. The function of teachers in fostering trust is shown by their demonstration of ability, benevolence, and integrity. These attributes augment the scholarly environment and fundamentally contribute to a nurturing educational encounter that facilitates student development and acquisition of knowledge. Furthermore, the study emphasizes good communication as a fundamental element in establishing trust, emphasizing the significance of teachers' willingness to be open and helpful in their interactions with pupils.

The study's findings have far-reaching consequences, indicating that the existence of trust may substantially influence student engagement, academic achievement, and the general dynamics inside the classroom. Instructional institutions are encouraged to cultivate an atmosphere that promotes establishing and maintaining trust via strategic instructional methodologies and interpersonal engagements.

This study enhances the current understanding of trust in educational settings and urges educators and administrators to emphasize and foster trust as a crucial component of successful English language instruction. The findings obtained from this study provide a helpful conceptual foundation for future research and practical implementations in educational environments, specifically within the distinct cultural and educational context of Indonesia.

The study still has limitations, which can be addressed by future researchers. The instrument for gathering data was initially designed for a study that had been carried out more than ten years beforehand. It is encouraged the creation of a new questionnaire based on the majority of current research developments. The current study examines the concept of trust in the context of English language teaching and learning, why students trust their teachers and how to build such trust. Future research may focus on subjects other than the teaching and learning of English. The researchers can also examine the relation or contribution of trust to other components of education such as learning outcomes, student

involvement, motivation, and other issues pertaining to that trust.

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Suryanto Suryanto

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