

***THE EFFECT OF LANGUAGE ATTITUDE AND GENDER: CULTURAL AND LEVEL OF EDUCATION***

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**ABSTRACT**

Learning a language is influenced by a variety of factors. Two of the most important of which are the learner's attitude and perception toward the target language. These are the concepts which have been the focal points of sociolinguists as far as learner behavior is concerned. Therefore, this study was conducted in an attempt to provide an account of the previous studies conducted on attitude and perception and their impacts on learners' learning abilities. Motivation, as a determining factor in learning, in relation to language performance is going to be discussed as well. Additionally, different frameworks for the classification of learners' belief will be discussed and relevant conclusions will be drawn.

Keywords : Language Attitude, Cultural, Level Of Education

**INTRODUCTION**

The attitudes that people have about language are highly correlated with their perception toward speaker of those particular language (Woorlard & Schieffelin, 1994). Williams (1994) argues that the definition of language is related to the definition of human. Another side most of anthropologists would agree that language represent their speakers and speakers represent their language. This phenomenon has come the foundation for many studies that have tried to discover to what extent, or perhaps more accurately stated, to what extreme, language ideologies influence people's attitudes and perception of their speaker. One of common type of language ideology is what Haslett (2000) refers to as "nationalistic language ideology". It was suggested that nationalistic language ideology is "the indexical relation between one nation and one language that still persist decades after anthropologists and other scholar have debunked the old equation of a race equal a culture equal a language. To explore this, many studies in language ideology have analyzed the adjectives that people use to describe languages and whether nationalistic ideologies have an impact on their overall language attitudes. The present study is an extension of this interview and analyzes how the attitude of language learners is in English Language Education Students, Third semester English Course of Universitas Simalungun.

**THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

The word attitudes is mental phenomenon, as Colin Baker (1992) states that attitudes is considered as mentality phenomenon which cannot be examined and observed directly but it is manifested in the form of action. It is refers to a hypothetical construct used to explain the direction and persistence of human behavior. So it can represent internal thoughts, feelings and tendencies in behavior across a variety of contexts.

Relating to attitude, Fishman (1996) states that there are mentalist and behaviorist viewpoints. Based on the mentalist view, attitudes are a mental and neutral state of readiness which cannot be observed directly, but must be inferred from the subject introspection. According to behaviorism, attitudes are an independent variable that can be statistically determined by observing actual behavior in social situations.

Moreover according to Lambert (1982), attitudes consist of three components: the cognitive, affective and conative components. Then, Lambert said (2010) explain that the cognitive components refers to an individual's believe structure, the affective to emotional reactions and the conative component comprehends the tendency to behave in certain way towards the objects.

### **Foreign Language Requirement**

Studies on language ideology toward English are important because as a student in English Education of Universitas Simalungun the learners should be known the ideology of the English language, so they also can applied it to other language such as Indonesian language or other their mother tongue language (Bahasa daerah). These obligatory language classes broaden students understanding of other cultures and many studies have demonstrated students support in making foreign language a requirement in the university (Marello, 1988; Roberts, 1992).

Roberts (1992) conducted a study which demonstrated the perception of entering university freshmen regarding foreign language education as a requirement. She founds that her participation overall supported foreign language study because it promoted cultural understanding. Roberts' findings mirrored those Morello (1988) in that over 65% of his participants felt that foreign language should be required to graduate from college.

### **Reason for Speaking English Structural/ Linguistic**

Based on beliefs about the structure of language and descriptive or contrastive linguistics. Involves isolation of grammatical and syntactic elements of L2 taught either deductively or inductively in a predetermined sequence. Often involves much meta-linguistic content or "learning about the language" in order to learn the language.

### **Cognitive**

Based on theories of learning applied specifically to second language learning. Focus is on the learning strategies that are compatible with the learners own style. L2 content is selected according to concepts and techniques that facilitate generalizations about the language, memorization and "competence" leading to "performance".

### **Affective/ Interpersonal**

Focuses on the psychological and affective pre-dispositions of the learner that enhance or inhibit learning. Emphasizes interaction among and between teacher and students and the atmosphere of the learning situation as well as students' motivation for learning. Based on concepts adapted from counseling and social psychology.

### **Functional/ Communicative**

Based on theories of language acquisition, often referred to as the "natural" approach, and on the use of language for communication. Encompasses multiple aspects of the communicative act, with language structures selected according to their utility in achieving a communicative purpose. Instruction is concerned with the input students receive, comprehension of the "message" of language and student involvement at the students' level of competence.

### **Perception of Language and Language Planning**

In addition to interview, other studies have found that exploring the adjective use to describe a language is an effective way to investigate language ideology. Ludwig (1983) conducted a study that analyzed students' attitudes of languages. Her participants consisted of French, German and Spanish students.

### **Language planning**

Language planning is a deliberate effort to influence the function, structure, or acquisition of languages or language variety within a speech community. It is often associated with government planning, but is also used by a variety of non-governmental organizations, such as grass-roots organizations and even

individuals. The goals of language planning differ depending on the nation or organization, but generally include making planning decisions and possibly changes for the benefit of communication. Planning or improving effective communication can also lead to other social changes such as language shift or assimilation, thereby providing another motivation to plan the structure, function and acquisition of languages.

In this program, all communities sharing a language are asked to come together to collaborate in spite of geographical challenges, and dialect, and political and community differences. Communities are asked to work as a team to share resources, knowledge, funding, resource people, infrastructure and expertise to develop a language authority. The purpose of language planning is to:

- Take responsibility for the revitalization and future of the language
- Assess the status of the language
- Gather language resources and make them available for language vitalization projects and strategies
- Develop a viable and sustainable plan for community language revitalization
- Plan and implement language revitalization projects
- Develop language-based policies

### **Attitude and Learning**

One core aim of education is to convey factual knowledge about subjects, but another is to encourage students' interest in these subjects. To further encourage mastery of factual knowledge and skills, education systems rely on examinations. However, research has raised the possibility that exams could have the unintended side effect of undermining the other core aim of education, that of encouraging student interest. Research has shown that people's goals can powerfully influence how they react to a task (Lamb, 2004). Therefore, fulfilling a task can be inextricably related to the goal of the participants in that matter. Furthermore, students may wish to take proficiency tests because of their practical benefits, for example finding a job, or the possibility of living in a foreign country. Some applicants of these kinds of proficiency tests may only wish to assess their mastery in a foreign language. Barron and Harackiewicz (2000), for example, have summarized research on college students which suggests that individuals with mastery goals are more likely to enjoy a task, while individuals with a performance goal are more likely to do well at it. However, these differences are not absolute. Under some circumstances, performance goals can actually lead to greater interest than mastery goals (see for example, Barron & Harackiewicz, 2001).

In a comparative study, Okada, Oxford and Abo (1996) found that the motivation of American learners of Indonesian students was far greater than that of learners of English and concluded that motivation must be higher when one tries to learn a more difficult language because greater persistence and determination are needed to cope with the stress of a difficult situation. Conversely, EFL learners in State University consider English as a difficult language to learn and so, such persistence and determination must also be present in order for language learning to be successful. In short everyone has to learn English, so teachers have to search for ways to motivate these less able students.

### **Language Attitude**

In daily life in various situations and events, we make countless inferences about language use and language users. We infer the geographical regions people come from on the basis of their speech, and we condemn styles of speech and figures of speech that are inappropriate in a certain context. For example, tele-shopping and tele-operations related to credit cards, now a part of our lives, direct us to talk with people we have never met. During these conversations we begin to draw inferences about the people we hear on the phone, about their gender, social background, friendliness, ethnic origin, and whether or not they have good intentions. Such inferences

determine the kind of approach that speakers and listeners adopt in relation to one another during communications. Attitudes towards various uses of language in society can be either positive or negative. One example of a positive language attitude is the desire of English language learners in Turkey to speak English with a British accent. In this case, the attitudes towards British English are positive. An example of a negative attitude is the development and use of new words in order to avoid gender discrimination. Examples do not occur frequently in Students; however, the use of "biliminsani"(science person) as opposed to "bilimadamı" (science man) is becoming more common in academic circles. English offers more examples , "police officer" instead of " policeman, " " chair " instead of chairman , " " humankind " instead of " mankind "

All of foregoing reinforces the connection between language and attitude. Language is a medium that contributes to the formation of speakers' attitudes about themselves and others.

### **Language attitudes and foreign language education**

Many research studies examining attitudes in foreign language education have been conducted at every age and proficiency level. The general aim of this line of research is to understand how students' and teachers' positive or negative attitudes towards a language influence the teaching and learning of the language. To carry out research on language attitudes, researchers have to develop a valid and reliable questionnaire incorporating psychological, sociological, and linguistic dimensions and then collect data by means of this tool. For instance, students' attitudes towards the foreign language taught will either facilitate or complicate their language learning. Study of the relationship between attitudes and learning will contribute to the development of foreign language teaching methods and materials appropriate for specific student groups exhibiting specific attitudes. At present, there are many studies of students' attitudes towards the foreign language they are learning, English, Mandarin, German and more.

### **Effects on attitudes towards language**

Prestige influences whether a language variety is considered a language or a dialect. In discussing definitions of language, Dell Hymes wrote that "sometimes two communities are said to have the same, or different, languages on the grounds of mutual intelligibility, or lack thereof", but alone, this definition is often insufficient.<sup>[9]</sup> Different language varieties in an area exist along a dialect continuum, and moving geographically often means a change in the local variety. This continuum means that despite the fact that standard German and standard Dutch are not mutually intelligible, the speech of people living near the border between Germany and the Netherlands will more closely resemble that of their neighbors across the border than the standard languages of their respective home countries. Even so, speakers near the border would describe themselves as speaking a variety of their respective standard languages, and the evolution of these dialects tends to mirror that of the standard languages as well. That they are classified as such reflects the fact that "language differences are not only marks of differential group membership, but also powerful triggers of group attitudes".<sup>[12]</sup> Such fuzziness has resulted in the aphorism "A language is a dialect with an army and a navy." That is, speakers of some language variety with political and social power are viewed as having a distinct language, while "'dialect' is a term that suggests lower-class or rural speech". A canonical example of this is the Scandinavian languages, including Danish, Swedish, and Norwegian, where language differences "constitute barriers to but do not wholly block communication", but are considered distinct languages because they are spoken in different countries.

**Data from interview**

Some questions in interview were adopted from questionnaire. The interview was used only to clarify if the data from the questionnaire were valid and reliable. After being checked, the result of interviewing from three participants showed supported result of the questionnaire. The data will be concluded here:

**1. Students' motivation in learning English**

Students' motivation can be divided into extrinsic motivation and intrinsic motivation. More than half students said that they learned English for pleasant family and as a demand of department in University. That showed their extrinsic motivation. They also explained that learning English is useful for them to get a good job, communicate with people from other countries and to get looking more educated. As one of them said, ... *I learn English because I want to pass a job interviewed in a big company.*"

**2. Students' attitudes in learning English**

Most of students plan to learn English as much as possible. They tried to improve their English by watching English movie, listening to the song, reading some books written in English, and practicing with friends. However, if they had to choose, they preferred to read books material written in bahasa Indonesia rather than written in English.

**CONCLUSION**

Based on the explanation above, it can be concluded that extrinsic motivation is a primary resource of students' motivation in learning English. The result provided evidence that students learned English for their future career, education and social interaction. In reference to students' attitude, the finding revealed that the students have positive attitudes toward the importance of English and use of English in educational context. This finding will be useful for the teacher in determining strategies and techniques to build students' intrinsic motivation. The last point, this study has limitation in participants that cannot be generalized in different participants. So, the next studies need to be applied in a control group to make data more general.

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