Students’ Attitude towards English Language learning  
Case Study: XI Grade of Aviation Vocational High School Cakra Nusantara in the academic 2017/2018

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Abstract

A number of people are living in multilingual community. They share their respective language, dialect, norms, as well as behavior. People’s various languages and social backgrounds influence relation of each individual. Cycle of actions and reactions toward typical language then termed as language attitude. Language attitude becomes concern of language study that investigate how people react and perceive other languages within a society. The process of learning and language attitude are inseparable. The greater students’ attitude towards particular language, then, would increase their motivation as well in learning that language. This article is a study report that aimed at giving insight of language attitude that involves nature of language attitude, its structures, approaches in conducting related studies, former case studies, as well as result of students’ language attitude towards English language in Indonesian English language learning context, particularly Vocational High School in Denpasar, Bali. This study is investigated by scientific measurement using direct approach. Data of this article is gathered by theoretical review as well as questionnaires response from students of Aviation Vocational High School, SMK Penerbangan Cakra Nusantara. The result of this study showed students’ positive attitude towards English language as a factor that influence their learning.

Keywords: language attitude, English language attitude study.

Introduction

In Indonesia, English as a foreign language becomes compulsory subject for students in Junior and Senior High School. English is thoroughly important for assisting students to communicate and compete in this globalization era (Syafrizala, Sutrisno, Gailea, & Liana, 2018). However, students in Indonesia has a little chance to practice their English. They only have limited time in school to learn and practice English. This kind of situation influences students’ motivation in learning. According to preliminary observation conducted in Aviation High School in Denpasar, the students do not have any clear objective to learn English as their environment do not “force” them to use English. It makes students have low interest and motivation to learn English. Moreover, students in Aviation High School have a little idea why they have to learn English as they think aviation and English is not related.

Language attitude and language learning has strong interrelated relationship. Attitude shows how people react or feel about the speaker with other languages. From sociolinguistics glasses, the language attitude has strong relevance with language choice in multilingual societies, dialect differences, and intelligibility (Garrett, 2010). Language attitudes arise when one social group comes in contact with a second social group then develops ideas about the language being used. Language attitude believes about the relationship between a speaker and their social group membership. At the individual level,
one function of language attitude is to bring some order to a social interaction, such as making it easier to predict and negotiate. At the intergroup level, it serves a social differentiation function, and enables the group to preserve and enhance favorable distinctions between our own group (in group) and relevant out groups. The greater positive attitude showed, the higher motivation they have in learning.

Therefore, this study investigate the English language attitude that showed by students in Aviation High School. The result of this study would be able to identify students' motivation that affects their English learning. The relation between English language attitude and English language learning is investigated by distributing questionnaires towards students at SMK Penerbangan Cakra Nusantara Denpasar. The subject of this study was 53 of XI grade students at SMK Penerbangan Cakra Nusantara. SMK Penerbangan Cakra Nusantara is an Aviation Vocational High School that is located in the capital city of Bali, Denpasar. The school has the urgency of their students to master English as the graduates of this school would have a lot of opportunities to be directly communicated with foreigners and their field requires understanding of aviation term that mostly in English. This article aimed at giving insight of language attitude that involves nature of language attitude, its structures, approaches in conducting related studies, former case studies, as well as result of students’ language attitude at SMK Penerbangan Cakra Nusantara towards English language in English Language Learning.

Defining Language Attitude

The nature of language attitude has been introduced by several experts from several years ago. Firstly, Oppenheim (2001) defines attitude as a psychological construct, in which the construction cannot be directly observed. Attitude incorporates cognitive and behavioral aspects, which is manifested in the form of stereotypes, beliefs, verbal statements, reactions, opinions, anger or some other emotion in various other aspects of behavior. In addition, Garrett (2010) agreed that attitude refers to a disposition to think, feel and behave toward a person (or object) in a particular way that affect someone’s thought and behavior. Henceforth, attitude refers to abstract psychological construction which influences someone’s thought and behavior towards particular subject or object that manifested into action and reaction.

The relation of attitude and language then named as language attitude. Language attitude refers to the attitude that showed by a person or a group when they are in the community which share different language. People commonly develop attitudes towards languages which indicate their views about those who speak the languages, and the contexts and functions with which they are associated (Holmes, 2013). In line with Holmes (2013), Bou (2015) states that language attitudes shape and are shaped by language choice, and interrelated towards language use. It prescribes what choices are appropriate according to factors such as formality, participants or domain. Thus, language attitude related to language choice in multilingual society that influenced by context, participants, and domain. Those factors then affect how people react towards other language users.

Language attitude can be learnt (Garrett, 2010). It is stated that it can be learnt by personal experience and social environment (by observational and instrumental learning). By personal experience, people mingle with multilingual community and experience by her or himself how to act towards the other languages and others. Day by day experiencing the same thing, then, particular attitude and behaviour will be formed. Next, observational learning involves paying attention to other people behaviour. A person can monitor and focus on someone behavior, then take a conclusion of what attitude being showed. The attitude that revealed then can be used as a source by that person. In instrumental learning, people attitude would be given rewards or detriments depends on how they behave. It is generally helped by teacher or parents to shape the children attitude. Therefore, language attitude is reaction towards language expressed by action or emotion. The language attitude can be learned from experience.

Structure and Factors That Influence Language Attitude

Language attitude is inseparable with three components as its structure, namely, cognitive, affection, and behavior or conative (McGroarty, 2009). Firstly, cognitive in language attitude contains beliefs about the world and the relations between object and social significance. For example, judgment of standard language varieties associates with job status. Secondly, affective component includes feeling of person towards the attitude object. For instance, when we agree or disagree, approve or disapprove, like or dislike towards attitude object. Thirdly, behavioral components manifested in someone's way of behave in consistent with his or her cognitive and affective judgment.

For clearer understanding of those three components with the language attitude, the following example is given by Garret (2010). "There is a girl who wants to learn Spanish as her foreign language. From cognitive perspective, she believes that learning Spanish will give her better understanding of Spanish culture. Then she will feel enthusiastic about being able to read written literature in Spanish (affective component). Therefore, she is saving money to enroll Spanish course."  

Relation between people's attitudes towards language varieties and their own behaviors are likely to be different according to the complexity of domains in which language is used. The behavior which is showed by particular person is influenced by internal and external factors. Internal factors include such as skills, knowledge and abilities needed to perform the action adequately. Nevertheless, external factors include time available, opportunities, facilities and the degree to which we are dependent on other people. Holmes (2013) also asserted that attitudes to language are strongly influenced by social and political factors. Language varieties have indexing properties which all members of the community are aware of. It is in relation with language policy, in which the language planners must take account of
attitudes when they select a suitable language as an official or national language.

**Positive and Negative Language Attitude**

The language attitude is divided into positive and negative attitude. In this paper, it aims at investigated positive or negative attitude towards English language learning. Positive attitude shows enthusiasm and excitement towards particular language use. Chaer and Agustina (2010) stated components of positive attitude namely Language loyalty (the act of being supported and loyal of particular language) Language Pride (the act of using and being proud of the language that is used as an identity), and Awareness of the Norm (the act of using the language appropriately). On the other hand, negative language attitude is the act of not showing the act of Language Loyalty, Language Pride, and Awareness of the Norm. In this study, the category of positive and negative components use to measure the respond showed by the students at SMK Cakra Nusantara.

**Approaches in Studying Language Attitude**

As what have been asserted previously, language attitude defines an abstract thing that cannot obviously measured by scale or percentage. The approaches in studying language attitude are proposed by Fasold in Ihemere (2006) and Holmes (2013). Fasold in Ihemere (2006) devided former approaches of studying language attitude as behaviourist approach and the mentalist approach. Behaviourist approach refers to an approach which data is simply taken from people respons in social situation. This approach no requires self-report and inferences. Nevertheless, mentalist approach seen attitude has to do with internal factor such as stimulus, feelings that affect person’s response. Therefore, mentalist approach in contrary with behaviourist approach but they have their respective goods and drawbacks. In addition, Holmes (2013) devided the approaches in to three categories as follows.

a. **Direct Approach**

In direct approach, the study conducted by simply asked questions directly by using questionnaire about language evaluation, preference, or others. Respondents are invited to articulate explicitly what their attitudes are to various language phenomena. The researcher gives several questions or statements and provides choice whether in using statement scale or numbers. The respondent also can have additional comments as the evidence of their choice in the scale. In the direct approach, the respondents themselves infer and report directly their own attitudes. Arguably, ticking boxes on a questionnaire in a direct survey of attitudes (or indeed in an indirect study) is also a kind of behavior from which researchers have to infer attitudes, but this kind of inference, on the basis of specifically targeted questions, is at one remove from that which characterizes the societal treatment approach.

b. **Indirect Approach**

Studying language attitudes means using more subtle, even deceptive, techniques than simply asking straight questions about what people's attitudes are to something. In implementing indirect approach, it generally uses matched guise technique. Typically, respondents in matched guise studies hear an audio-tape recording of a single speaker reading out the same text a number of times, with each reading differing from the others in one respect only, as far as possible. The typical arguments found were as follows.

c. **Societal Treatment Approach**

In the societal treatment approach, the researcher has to infer attitudes from various kinds of observed behaviors and sources. It generally works from texts or observations of various kinds rather than through eliciting responses. The response or arguments devided into several types namely: communicative, national, personal, educational and cognitive. Example for each argument as follows (Table 1).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Arguments</th>
<th>Example</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communicative arguments</td>
<td>- Indonesian language is more effective for communication than English.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Complex concepts can be expressed more easily in English than in Indonesian language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National arguments</td>
<td>- Favoring English means neglecting an important aspect of the national identity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Favoring English may create class differences in the nation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- The discouragement of English use is harmful to our national interests.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal arguments</td>
<td>- English is useful for getting a better job.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- For a career in the civil service, it may be better not to use English but Indonesian languages.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Speaking good English shows that someone belongs to the modern educated society.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational arguments</td>
<td>- Switching to Indonesian languages as a medium of instruction would bring down the educational standards.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- If a student is good at English, he is good at other subjects too.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Favoring the students’ use of English too much undermines principles of national education.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

129

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Phenomena in language attitude has commonly happens among realm. Several models of case study in language attitude in language learning would be reviewed as follows.

Wang & Ladegaard (2014) study concerned with young people’s attitude of language varieties: Putonghua (P) and Cantonese (C) in Guangzhou, southern China. This study distributed questionnaire to 174 students with the focus of gender difference attitude towards P or C. The study resulted female participants tend to use Putonghua and male participants used the Cantonese. One of the female participant stated that ‘People often laughed at me when I first learned Cantonese and spoke it incorrectly’ (OG female subject speaking Cantonese). The female participant more concerned with appropriateness and appearance, and hence were more likely to prefer and use the high prestige standard variety, whereas male respondents were more reluctant to speak standard because they did not want to alienate family and friends, and hence would prefer the local vernacular which was seen as the language of the ingroup.

Another study conducted by Huang and Kuo (2015). They conducted experimental study towards language attitudes of Estonian secondary school students, ages 15 to 18. The study investigated 6 females students' attitudes toward Mandarin-speaking and Taiwanese-speaking males. Huang and Kuo used direct method in conducting their study and distributed questionnaire as well as had interview with the respondents. The study revealed that participants’ positive attitudes toward Taiwanese-speaking males were higher than Mandarin-speaking males in average. This result came up because the participants were born in southern part of Taiwan, so that the Taiwanese seemed more familiar towards the participants. Therefore, the study showed that the females participants tend to have greater attitude towards taiwanese-speaking males due to family background reason.

Jiménez (2017) investigated students’ of Columbian University perception and attitude towards English. The background condition of this research was in that university, dropout students were increasing day by day and they performed poor academic performance in English. Then, the researcher worried of that condition and aimed at improving students’ academic performance. This is a qualitative research with questionnaire, interview result, and teacher’s diary as the method of gathering the data. The study resulted that students’ showed good attitude towards English lesson. They gave educational and personal arguments as their reason why they took the English course. Several example of their answer from questionnaire as follows.

“Because English is the universal language and it almost mandatory to know it nowadays. Furthermore, it is very useful for me throughout my career and in the future for my professional life.” (Student 12)
“I’m taking English because it opens doors and guarantees a better future.” (Student 2)
“Well, my motivation is being able to see, read, and understand articles in English. To talk to foreigners and other people in English, listen to music and understand it, and above all, to achieve a good level of English to apply scholarships in another country.” (Student 11)

Syafirzala, Sutrisno, Gallea, and Liana (2018) conducted study that investigated correlation between attitude in language learning and speaking. The research sample was 80 Indonesian students of science and social class in the academic year 2016/2017. The result of this study showed that students' language learning attitude toward English and Speaking achievement has significant positive correlation at strong grade. Once students showed positive language learning toward English, their achievement in speaking would be greater.

Therefore, from the previous studies, it shows that students' positive attitude toward English influenced by their purpose to study and realize the importance of mastering English as their Foreign Language. The case of dropped out students left their course are mostly affected by personal reasons such as insecurity, inconstancy, and fear of making mistakes. In a nutshell, it can be concluded that students showed positive attitude towards English language. Their positive attitude then influenced their motivation and achievement in learning. In this recent study, the researcher investigated the attitude of students at Aviation High School towards English that influence their motivation in learning.

Research Method

This study is a qualitative research. This research used direct and societal treatment approach to investigate to attitude showed by the respondents. The data of this research was gathered by distributing questionnaires related to language attitude towards English language learning. There are 18 questions divided into 13 statements with options and 5 open questions in order to reveal answer and evidence besides the answer provide in the options. The indicator of language attitude which were used to formulate questionnaire were language loyalty, language pride, and awareness of norm (Table 2).

The questionnaire used Semantic Differential scale (1-4), with the criteria “Tidak pernah” (Never): 1, “Kadang-kadang” (sometimes): 2, “Sering” (often): 3, and “Selalu (always): 4. After the data collected, the data was analyzed and created into a summary.

Findings and Discussion

The findings of this study in the form of 13 statements with option (Thurstone Scale) are summarized as follows
Table 2: Result of Questionnaire (checklist) Language Attitude of English Language Learning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Indicator</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Language Pride</td>
<td>Saya percaya Bahasa Inggris dapat eksis di era global. (I believe that English can be existed in globalization era).</td>
<td>(35 Respondents: always.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Saya mengakui bahwa Bahasa Inggris lebih menarik daripada bahasa lainnya. (I acknowledge that English is more interesting than other languages).</td>
<td>(21 respondents: sometimes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Saya menggunakan bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa utama dalam pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris. (I use English as main language in English language learning).</td>
<td>(28 respondents: sometimes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Saya lebih akrab jika menggunakan Bahasa Inggris dengan teman sekelas untuk berdiskusi pada saat pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris. (I am feeling closer to the other students when I use English to have discussion in learning process).</td>
<td>(37 respondents: sometimes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Saya menggunakan Bahasa Inggris untuk bertanya kepada guru jika materi yang disampaikan guru kurang saya mengerti dalam pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris. (I use English to ask questions to the teacher if there is something confusing about the lesson).</td>
<td>(37 Respondents: sometimes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Saya menggunakan Bahasa Inggris untuk menjawab pertanyaan yang diajukan oleh guru kepada saya dalam pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris. (I use English to answer questions that ask by the teacher during the learning process).</td>
<td>(24 Respondents: sometimes.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Saya menggunakan Bahasa Inggris untuk berdiskusi dengan teman dalam pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris. (I use English to discuss with classmates during the lesson.)</td>
<td>(39 Respondents: sometimes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Language Loyalty</td>
<td>Saya selalu menggunakan Bahasa Inggris untuk berkomunikasi dengan teman sekelas. (I always use English to communicate with classmates).</td>
<td>(43 Respondents: sometimes).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Saya senang menggunakan Bahasa Inggris untuk bertanya kepada guru jika materi yang disampaikan guru kurang saya mengerti dalam pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris. (I am happy to use English to ask to teacher if there is material that I do not understand).</td>
<td>(34 Respondents: sometimes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Awareness of Norms</td>
<td>Saya senang menggunakan bahasa Inggris untuk berinteraksi dengan teman dalam pembelajaran bahasa Inggris. (I am happy to use English to interact to my classmates in English learning).</td>
<td>(35 Respondents: sometimes).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Saya senang menggunakan Bahasa Inggris dalam percakapan dengan teman sekolah. (I am happy to use English in daily conversation in school).</td>
<td>(39 Respondents: sometimes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Saya menggunakan Bahasa Inggris baku untuk mengajukan pertanyaan kepada guru jika materi yang diajarkan kurang saya mengerti.I use formal English to ask questions if there is difficult material that I do not understand.</td>
<td>(33 Respondents: sometimes)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Saya menggunakan Bahasa Baku untuk menjawab pertanyaan yang diberikan oleh guru. I use formal English to answer questions that given by the teacher.</td>
<td>(36 Respondents: sometimes)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table presented that 1 out of 13 statements are responded positively. The result “always” indicated that the students believed English language would be existed and used globally. Students’ responses referred to positive attitude towards English Language. Other 12 statements showed "sometimes" choice which means that students unsurely believed in the situation or statement given. However, in line with the positive and negative language attitude indicators, the choice still not drag the language attitude into the negative one as the “never” choice result is not appeared on the summary of result response. The students showed intention and awareness of using the language appropriately, shows effort to learn the language, and often share problem related to English language to the experts, friends, and classmate.

5 Open Questions (to give opportunity for the unwritten answer in option)


From 53 responses, 2 responses show that the students do not like English because they do not understand difficult words, 2 of responses showed they sometimes like the English depends on the teacher. 49 responses stated that they like English, because it is very interesting, important for future career, and challenging.
2. Apakah menurut kamu belajar Bahasa Inggris itu penting? Mengapa?
Do you think it is important to learn English? Why?

From 53 responses, all the responses stated that English is very important to be learnt because it will be easier to be adapted in this globalization era. In addition, the responses stated that English is important for building up relations internationally and be able to communicate with many people.

3. Apakah kamu bangga dapat menggunakan Bahasa Inggris dalam pembelajaran di sekolah? Mengapa?
Are you proud of being able to use English when you are learning at school? Why?

From 53 responses, 3 of responses stated that they do not feel any proud because English is not a new thing, and English is not main language that we have to be mastered. They tend to be proud of they are able to use their first and second language, which is Basa Bali and Bahasa Indonesia appropriately. However, other 50 responses shows feeling of proud because they can use English for practicing later on once they meet foreigners or when they will apply for vacancies then, it would be easier.

4. Bahasa apa yang sering kamu gunakan pada saat pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris berlangsung?
What language that is commonly use in English class?

8 of responses said they use full English, 4 responses use Bahasa Indonesia, 41 responses said they use bilingual, Indonesian and English.

5. Bahasa apa yang kamu gunakan untuk berdiskusi dengan teman sekelas pada saat pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris berlangsung?
What language that you use for discussion session with classmate in English learning?

8 of responses use Indonesian, and the rest 45 stated that they use mixed Indonesian and English.

The open-questions use Societal Treatment in which the arguments given by respondents, according to the questionnaires results, then, are divided as follows (Table 3).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Arguments</th>
<th>Statements Example from Respondent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Communicative arguments</td>
<td>- An English language is effective for communication globally.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- By mastering English, I can speak well with foreigners.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal arguments</td>
<td>- English is useful for getting a better job, particularly for English for Aviation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- It is good because once I travel broad, I can be well-adapted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Speaking good English shows that someone belongs to the modern educated society.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educational argument</td>
<td>- I like English because the learning environment is exciting and challenging.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the result of questionnaires, students at SMK Cakra Nusantara shows positive attitude towards English language learning. Nevertheless, several of responses stated they have less-positive one towards English learning because of some reasons: method of teaching, classroom management, as well as teacher. Then, it can be concluded the reason of their less-positive response is because of outside factors.

**Implications of Language Attitude: Critical Review**

From the previous theoretical and empirical review as well as discussion, there are several implications of language attitude particularly for the existence and learning of the language itself. First, the language attitude analysis can be used as a pre-teaching activity (in the planning session) in order to know students motivation and how do their perspective towards the language. So that, it can help the teacher to decide appropriate material, teaching technique, as well as treatment to be given to the students during learning process. Second, in classroom language learning context, students not only learn by their own self. Their language attitude towards their peer, friends, and also teacher will affect their learning. In multilingual class, teacher plays important role in students learning. Teacher needs to recognize various language behavior and dialect from students' error speech behavior. Teacher also has to consider students' pre-existed attitude toward language skills. It will affect their attitude towards the language they being learnt as well as increase their participation in the classroom. Teachers must create in their classrooms a range of participation opportunities so that students can experience a wide variety of language forms and functions, oral and literate, including those that will provide for success in the public arena in their societies. Third, Language attitude also affected people's intelligibility. Once a person shows

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132
positive attitude towards particular language or community, for instance, he or she likes Korean people, it would be easier for him or her to understand to language and dialects. They feel more motivated and discouraged which will be resulted in more successful learning.

Conclusion

Language attitude is a psychological construction which is manifested into action and reaction towards certain things particularly language. The language attitude has three components namely cognitive, affective and behavioral components. Those three components would be processed as a cycle once someone shows a reaction and actions towards language. Since language attitude is an abstract things that hard to be measured, researchers an linguists propose several approaches includes direct, indirect, and societal environment, to create reliable data of language attitude research. The language attitude has several implications towards language itself, such as in educational context, as well as language planning and policies. According to the result of language attitude towards XI Grade students at Aviation Senior High School Cakra Nusantara, it resulted in positive attitude towards English language learning. Their responses presented in communicative, personal, and educational arguments towards the components of positive language attitude (Language Loyalty, Language Pride, and Awareness of Norms). Therefore, the result of this study can be used as a reference for the teacher, particularly, at SMK Cakra Nusantara, that their students already had positive attitude towards English language learning. So that, teacher needs to consider the classroom management, teaching technique, and the choice of appropriate material for increasing students’ motivation in learning.

References


