

## **STUDENTS' LANGUAGE ATTITUDE IN MAINTAINING HERITAGE LANGUAGE**

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### **Abstract**

*The objectives of the research study were to determine the students' attitude toward heritage language and to know students' habits in maintaining heritage language. A small-scale survey was carried out to probe students' language attitude in maintaining heritage language. 20 participants took part in this present study. The research data were collected through Two research instruments, they are: a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview. The finding showed that the students have positive language attitudes towards languages and maintain heritage language well, this is supported by the active role of students in preserving local languages in their respective environments.*

**Keywords:** *students' language, attitude, heritage language*

### **Abstrak**

Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui sikap siswa terhadap bahasa daerah dan untuk mengetahui kebiasaan siswa dalam memelihara bahasa daerah. Survei skala kecil dilakukan untuk mengetahui sikap siswa dalam mempertahankan Bahasa daerah. 20 peserta mengambil bagian dalam penelitian ini. Data penelitian dikumpulkan melalui dua instrumen penelitian, yaitu: angket dan wawancara semi terstruktur. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa siswa memiliki sikap positif terhadap bahasa daerah dan memelihara bahasa daerah dengan baik, hal ini didukung oleh peran aktif siswa dalam melestarikan bahasa daerah di lingkungannya masing-masing.

**Kata kunci:** bahasa siswa, sikap, bahasa daerah

### **Introduction**

Language is a medium for all to use in transmitting knowledge from one person to another. It is not only a vital part of daily life, but it also serves as a connection to the culture which can be very important for the child. It can be a family culture, the bigger world, or just a small community. It makes people accustomed to different cultures which are special and unique. In terms of transmission of knowledge, language and culture are closely related and parents are the first heritage-language contact for children and therefore have the responsibility of passing on the native language to their children (Gupta, 2020). A language is instrumentally highly valued if its knowledge provides economic or status advantages. Integrative attitudes are directed toward social networking and collective identity. A language is highly valued if its understanding allows identification with significant others. (Ehala & Niglas, 2006).

Attitude is a set of beliefs and psychological predispositions to act or evaluate behavior in a certain way (Gardner 1985). Language attitude is also described as a complex notion which can be defined as part of the existential competences, but

also as a dynamic structure of learner attitudes (Tóodor, 2016).

Language learners' attitudes toward the language (including its status and prestige) and its speakers have a direct effect on the language learning process and outcomes. Dörnyei (2009) believed that attitude is one of the most important factors in assessing learner success and achievement.

The amount of research on the relationship between language attitude and second-language achievement has concentrated on the motivational aspects of language attitude or attitudes toward native speakers of the target language. Students, on the other hand, can have either positive or negative feelings about the target language. Individuals who preserve their heritage language are therefore able to engage in an enriched world of interactions originating from two cultures.

Several aspects contribute to the preservation of heritage language as a linguistic resource in the construction of ethnic identities (Holmes, 2001 & Fought, 2011). When a language is perceived as an essential element in protecting a minority's culture, it can be retained and protected. According to previous research on heritage language

by Jeon (2008) and Teachout (2005), the family is a significant contributor to language maintenance.

Proficiency in the heritage language not only encourages English acquisition, but it also facilitates the acquisition of other languages (Cummins, 1983) it can lead to higher academic achievement and also results in greater cognitive flexibility including an enhanced ability to deal with abstract concepts (Cummins, 1986).

Furthermore, proficiency in the heritage language has been identified to play a central role in one's ethnic identification (Fishman, 2002). In other words, heritage language proficiency instills a stronger sense of ethnic identity and connection to the cultural group, which in turn leads to greater and more positive self-esteem (S. Lee, 2002).

The loss of proficiency in the heritage language not only diminishes the potential to experience and see the world from different perspectives, but also leads to breakdowns in communication with family members, alienation from ethnic community networks, and lower self-esteem (Snodgrass, 199).

According to these perspectives, language inheritance is created by family patterns, especially those of parents. Even, there are fundamental aspects that are ensuring that the inherited vocabulary does not depend entirely on ancestors. Kids, on the other hand, play an important part in preserving it since they are the inheritors and players in whether or not the inherited language is retained.

A heritage language is interchangeable with "mother tongue," "native language," and "community language," in the sense that it is a language other than English used by immigrants and their children (Lee & Shin, 2008). In this explanation, it is evident that the inherited language is the mother tongue and the primary language used by children from the first birth until now. The inherited language can be developed in that language community.

However, as the century progresses, the heritage vocabulary is being less and less used and maintained. It's all because young people/students are feeling a sense of ownership problem due to a lack of confidence in its preservation.

As a result, based on the examples above, this thesis would examine how powerful students' inherited languages are and whether they choose to use their native language.

## **Literature Review**

It is clear that while there is a broad range of perspectives from which to define language attitude, the general unifying concepts about attitude are that it involves both beliefs and feelings, that it

theoretically should influence behavior, and that there are a range of issues about which people have language attitudes, from opinions about one own language, to foreign speakers of one language, to foreign languages, to official policies regarding languages. Different researchers in various fields (such as linguistics, social psychology, and sociology) focus on these different areas, and hence their definitions of language attitude reflect their perspectives (Coronel, 2009).

In its general sense, an attitude is a hypothetical construct aiming at explaining the direction and persistence of human behavior (Baker 1992). Therefore, an individual's language attitude is his disposition to respond positively or negatively to a language and its users.

A language attitude can be positive or negative. In reality, some people may also hold a neutral attitude. A positive language attitude is followed with action, whereas a negative language attitude is followed with negatives one. In some cases, the terms positive or negative can be change in to favorable or unfavorable, as stated by Edwards (1994): "The concept of attitude, a cornerstone of traditional social psychology, is not one about which there has been universal agreement. At a general level, however, attitude is a disposition to react favorably or unfavorably to a class of objects. This disposition is often taken to comprise three components: feelings (affective element), thoughts (cognitive element) and, following upon these, predispositions to act in a certain way (behavioral element). That is, one knows or believes something, has some emotional reaction to it and, therefore, may be assumed to act on this basis." (Edwards, 1994).

Language attitude is closely linked to the philosophy of language status, since language attitude addresses the importance of language in certain respects. According to Trudgill (2000), language as a social phenomenon is inextricably intertwined with society's social system and value systems, and different dialects and accents are studied in numerous ways.

Many scholars study language attitudes and heritage languages, such as research done by (Sugiyanta, 2020). He investigated Parents' Language Attitudes Against Languages and Heritage Language Preservation. According to the results of this report, parents have a favorable outlook toward languages and the protection of heritage languages. This is due to the fact that it is influenced by a variety of influences, including the role of parents, environment, school, family, daily activities, and culture.

Talking about parents' role on the part of heritage language, Makarova et al. (2019) made a study entitled Children's language exposure and parental language attitudes in Russian as a heritage language acquisition by bilingual and multilingual children in Canada. In this study, the objective of this research is to determine the relationship between parents' language attitudes and children's language proficiency.

The results obtained are that with the right determination and language attitudes, parents can pass a heritage language on to children even in a highly unfavorable environment, and a great sound foundation for bilingualism. Russian-speaking parents voted for bilingualism on paper and created sufficient language input for their children's language acquisition.

## **Theoretical Framework**

### **Heritage Language Maintenance**

Fishman (1970) has proposed the notion of "domains" as the main spaces or fields of a culture where language use can be contextualized in particular circumstances. These fields include family, education, religion, employment, and friendship. So one way to preserve a language is to start with an environment that is always in direct contact with certain people. Because we know that the preservation of the language of the place also dramatically influences this.

### **Children's Attitudes of Learning the Heritage Language**

Children are delighted when learning new languages, especially languages that they find interesting. But the language foundation for children must be given when they are very active in learning a language. For example, according to Lee (2009), regardless of whether students could speak their HL of Pueblo or Navajo, students communicated how much they valued their culture and language. Some of these students emphasized that it is crucial to learn the language to speak with elders and therefore not disrespect them.

According to Holmes (2001), positive attitudes support efforts to use the language in a variety of domains, which allows people to resist pressure from the majority group to switch to their language. The positive language attitudes can be seen when people: (1) feel proud to use the language that they have; (2) are loyal to use it in all domains; (3) have eagerness to maintain the language although there is the situation that forcing them to leave their language and still they are not influenced by anything. In conclusion, the positive language

attitudes are really crucial in maintaining a certain language used by a certain community.

### **Strategies to Promote HLM**

There are two kinds of strategies used in promoting HLM: Heritage Language Only (HLO) and One Parent One Language (OPOL). Heritage Language Only (HLO) can generally be described as a strategy in which HL is exclusively used as language communication at home (Gupta, 2020). This strategy is implemented primarily at home, where the family always use heritage language in their environment (home). One Parent One Language (OPOL) a strategy in which one parent maintains the use of only the heritage language in all conversations with the child (Gupta, 2020).

### **Factors Influencing Language Attitude**

According to Jendra (2010) there are several factors may influence the language attitudes:

1. The Prestige and Power of the Language

In many countries around the world an enthusiasm to learning English is not uncommon. Some people assume that learning foreign language (English, for example) will correlate to the declining the national loyalty of the learners. However, scholars have learned that the enthusiasm on learning a foreign language is not always correlated with a negative attitude towards the national and cultural feeling of the learners. A research on Japanese children studying English for example, proved that although the learners showed great attraction towards the Western culture as well as the language being studied, they kept holding a strong Japanese identity and a language loyalty. But since the numbers of English users around the world is so large, speakers of other languages see the situation as a pressure from the dominant group (English supporters). Thus, government of a country may consider it necessary to release some regulations in order to protect the language of its people from the English domination.

2. Historical Background of Nations

Some Middle East people may not want to study English because they learn from their history that western people were colonialist. The view is possibly strengthened with some complicated contemporary disputes between the Western and Arabic (Muslim) cultures. Being overshadowed with the misery caused by the atomic bombs dropped in their country in the past, some Japanese people today may not want to think of English as an important global vernacular that need to be learned. Thus, both the Middle East people and the Japanese hold a negative attitude towards English as an international tongue because of some historical

background. The same attitude might be found among some Indonesians when they think it wrong to learn Dutch or Japanese because the languages are associated with the colonialism upon their country in the past.

### 3. The Social and Traditional Factors

In the society where a diglossic situation is found the higher variety of the language is normally considered as a better form than the lower one. In the society with a traditional polyglossia, a negative attitude may be demonstrated towards the use of language associated with a higher class, especially if it is perceived as instrumental for controlling or downgrading the other people. Some Balinese for example, may reject to use the higher variety of their tongue when talking to the people who are traditionally 'higher' especially when the people addressed in that variety respond in lower variety to them. However, if such a traditional diglossic or polyglossic situation is fading, positive reaction towards the system may come up. Thus, in order to maintain the tradition the society believe it to be necessary to learn and use the higher as well as the lower variety of the language.

### 4. The Language Internal System

People often show positive attitude towards learning a language because the grammar, pronunciation, and vocabulary are relatively easy. As the gender-based nominal systems of the language is difficult to learn English, instead of French and German. A negative attitude might be also found towards learning Chinese with its complex total pronunciation and orthographic system. An internal diglossic or polyglossic situation may also matter.

## Method

A small-scale survey was carried out to probe students' language attitude in maintaining heritage language. A small-scale survey was carried out to probe students' language attitude in maintaining heritage language. Two research instruments were used: a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview and the sample of this research was 20 participants.

## Research Question

Based on the research goals mentioned above, the following research question may be formulated:

1. What is the language attitude of the students toward their heritage language?
2. How do students preserve their heritage language habits?

## Finding and Discussion

### The Students' Language Attitude Toward Heritage Language

From the result taken from the questionnaire it can be seen that 40% students strongly agreed while 60% agreed that they like to use regional languages in their daily life.

Regarding the use of local language, it was found that 100% of the students agreed that they are proud to use the local language.

30% of the students agreed that they feel more confident in using regional languages than Indonesian while 60% of the students disagreed and 10% strongly disagreed.

10% of the students strongly agreed that they love the local language because it shows that they are native Indonesian while 90% agreed.

15% of the students agreed that they feel more confident in associating with various circles of society using regional languages than Indonesian, while 85% of the students disagreed.

40% of the students strongly agreed that they don't feel burdened when they use regional languages while 60% of the students agreed.

15% of the students strongly agreed that learning the local language is not that important to them, while 15% agreed, 45% disagreed, and 25% strongly disagreed.

55% of the students disagreed that using regional languages is very boring, while 45% of the students strongly disagreed.

10% of the students strongly agreed that they understand regional languages better than Indonesian while 40% of the students agreed, 40% disagreed and 10% strongly disagreed.

40% of the students strongly agreed that they feel more familiar with terms in regional languages than Indonesian, while 15% agreed, 30% disagreed, and 15% strongly disagreed.

35% of the students strongly agreed that they are not interested in using Indonesian in everyday life, while 30% agreed, 20% disagreed, and 15% of the students strongly disagreed.

60% of the students strongly agreed that the local language has many uses, while 40% agreed.

60% of the students strongly agreed that sing the local language is very important while 40% agreed.

55% of the students strongly agreed that they think the local language is rich in vocabulary, while 35% agreed and 10% of the students disagreed.

50% of the students strongly agreed that local/regional culture has a vital role in the modernization, while 25% of the students agreed, and 25% disagreed.

75% of the students strongly agreed that being able to speak the local language reflects the love for our country's native culture, while 25% of the students agreed.

65% of the students strongly agreed that they try to improve my local language skills, while 25% of the students agreed, and 10% disagreed.

80% of the students strongly agreed that local languages are historical heritage, so they will take part in preserving local languages, while 20% agreed.

50% of the students strongly agreed that as a local, they need to learn the local language, while 30% agreed, and 20% disagreed.

55% of the student strongly agreed that learning the local language is essential to know the mindset of the local community itself, while 45% of the students agreed.

70% of the students strongly agreed that learning the local language is essential to know the civilization of the area itself, while 20% of the students agreed, and 10% disagreed.

80% of the students strongly agreed that learning the local language is essential to know community literature itself, while 20% of the students disagreed.

65% of the students strongly agreed that using regional languages is one way to preserve the variety of regional languages itself, while 25% of the students agreed, and 10% disagreed.

The above results from the questionnaire obtain the average of each group, such as 41.5 percent strongly agreed, 35 percent agreed, 18.3 percent disagreed, and 5.2 percent strongly disagreed. The majority of the students have a constructive outlook toward preserving their heritage language, and it has been incorporated into everyday activities in their environment.

### **The Habit of Using Regional Languages towards The Preservation of Regional Languages.**

Habit in using local language to maintain the heritage language like 21% they always use the local language, 28.5% often, 44% sometimes, and 6% seldom use the local language. Based on this data, it is clear that in using the regional language (heritage language), students can also be categorized as very positive. In other words, they play an active role in preserving the regional language itself.

Based on the interview data, it can be concluded that in addition to the way of preservation and the habit of using local languages, it is also found that the strategy of preserving and enhancing the heritage language. To maintain and promote the heritage language, it is suggested that they use local

language in daily activities especially in their families and in their environment and recognize their local language to the others and those strategies were called Heritage language only and one parent one language.

As a material for discussion in this research, various aspects can be discussed in this research like the factors that affect the maintenance of heritage language and the efforts to maintain the heritage language.

### **Conclusion**

Based on the findings in the previous section, students have favorable language attitudes toward languages and heritage language preservation, which is supported by their active involvement in maintaining local languages in their respective settings, and students may also be classified as very positive in heritage language use. In other words, they consciously contribute to the preservation of the regional language. Aside from the mindset and practice of keeping heritage language, the students often make an attempt to improve and preserve their heritage language, which leads to a habit of using local language in their family and environment.

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