

## **STUDENTS' LANGUAGE ATTITUDES TOWARDS THE ACQUISITION OR MAINTENANCE OF HERITAGE LANGUAGE; A CASE STUDY**

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### **Abstract**

Language attitude is one of the most important things in learning a language. It determines students' seriousness towards language acquisition. This research investigates students' language attitudes towards their heritage language and other languages that they acquire and learn. The study used a qualitative approach with descriptive analysis, the participants are about 20 students with different languages. The questionnaire and interview consist of heritage and cultural items. This study investigated the students' language attitude towards their heritage language and other languages they acquire and learn and how valuable are those languages to them. The result demonstrates that students' language attitudes toward the acquisition or maintenance of heritage language among students are relatively good. They use foreign languages (Arabic and English) in daily communication on a weekday, while the heritage language is used only on their holiday when they meet with parents and another family, to support other language acquisition, the school establish a language policy that relates to language use at that school. In maintaining the heritage language, the students use it in their home to interact with family members during holidays from school activities. Finally, the study above has wide pedagogical implications for learning and teaching language for students, it implies that teaching language to students should be in line with students' needs. And the use of heritage language and foreign-language should be balanced among them, therefore, the student's language attitudes will grow faster and better.

**Keywords:** *Language attitude, language maintenance, theory of bilingualism, heritage language.*

### **INTRODUCTION**

Language is defined as a knowledge of rules, principles, and the ways of saying and doing things with sounds, words, and sentences rather than just knowledge of specific sounds, words, and sentences (Wardhaugh 2002.p.2) it shows that language as a mean to communicate and send the message to another interlocutor, in doing communication, the people have language attitudes which shows how the attitude of speakers to use that language. Language attitudes are an important aspect of learning the language.

This research is conducted because of some reasons; First reason is about the language attitude of students in acquiring and maintaining the heritage language. A heritage language is a language that is used by the speaker in the family, and it is identified as the mother language that the family used in communication. In this case, the students are not required to use heritage language in communication, because of the language policy of the institution. The language policy

emphasizes all students use foreign languages (English and Arabic) as tools for communication and it is used in all societal communities where the interaction happened at school. Language policy is defined as a deliberate choice made by governments or other authorities regarding the relationship between language and social function. (Nasution, 2017).

Second, students' language attitude toward the acquisition of other languages also becomes another reason for doing this research because these acquisitions greatly influenced students' language output in communication. This language acquisition relates to the language policy that was applied in the school.

Furthermore, students' valorization of language in communication, the students are obligated to learn languages (English and Arabic) and valorize them in communication. They use those languages in daily interaction with friends except on Sunday. Sunday is a free day where they may use Bahasa Indonesia to communicate.

From those descriptions, the researcher tends to describe how was language attitude toward the acquisition and heritage language in Al-Mansyuriyah Senior High School and how valuable the languages that they acquire for themselves.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Many theories described language attitudes. Such as Dittmar (1976) cite (Ianos,2015) proposed four characteristics of language attitudes, they are; the selection of primary language that people use in a multilingual community, the distribution of language, the difference in dialect, and the interaction among speakers based on the problems that arise. Hence, Language attitude is considered "an umbrella term", which refers to various attitudinal objects, including language, dialects, speech styles, speakers, communities, language learning, and language use. (p.2)

Language attitude is one of the most important things in learning a language. It determines students' seriousness towards language acquisition. There is the positive and negative attitude of students to indicate the seriousness of students. Positive attitudes will lead students to good ability in language acquisition and negative attitudes will give a bad impact on the o language ability of students because language attitude is a set of our mind, showing what we feel, how we act. (Ratnaningtyas, 2017)

Language maintenance is defined as the process and pursuit of intergenerational linguistic continuity. Fishman (1989) suggests that, when two or more languages are in contact, three alternatives can occur. First, the languages may be maintained without any change. Second, there may be a shift of some form in the language, third, one of the languages may be leading to a form of non-use, called language loss or language death (Okpanachi & Joseph. 2017).

There are several factors that contribute to the maintenance of heritage language, such as family bonding that use language in communication, and staying connected to the homeland, by which children may learn more about the roots. And using heritage language more than in community to show the identity of the speaker (Budiyana, 2017).

In terms of types of bilingualism, Weinreich (1995) divided bilingualism into three kinds, firstly compound bilingualism, who learns two languages in the same context and activates them concurrently leading to a fused representation of the language in his brain. Secondly, coordinated-bilingual refers to someone who learns a language in a different environment. Finally, subordinate bilingualism is concerned with the mastery of the first language to establish the target language. (Margana, 2015).

The definition of heritage language was proposed by Valdess (2000) and quoted by Polinsky (2007) as individuals raised in homes where a language other than English is spoken and who are to some degree bilingual in English and heritage language was used. And it was the earlier acquisition of language before other languages. (p. 369). In line with previous us definition, Lee and Shin (2008) pointed out that heritage language is interchangeable with 'mother tongue', 'native language', and 'community language'. In this case. The language that is used by the parents and children in their homes beside the dominant language in the community. (p. 13). In

heritage language, however, the range of variation is much greater, and it often leads to the suggestion that heritage language is inconvenient with the era, and it will cause heritage speakers to leave heritage language use in society. Heritage speakers are the people who use the language in a home where one language is spoken and used it in communication.

## METHOD

The study was conducted in the twelfth grade of Al-Mansyuriyah Islamic boarding school in Tangerang, the school implemented a boarding system where the students must stay there every time. The students are coming from different regions with cultural diversity. The research was done for one week starting from 12<sup>th</sup> of December 2020 to the 18<sup>th</sup> of December 2020. The researcher took 20 students as participants to give the data based on the instruments, 5 respondents are from Jambi, 5 respondents are Sundanese, 5 Students are Javanese, and 5 more students are Bangkanese. To gain the data, the researcher used two instruments, they are; open-ended questions) and interviews (Semi-structured). The questionnaire consists of the questions related to the topic and conducted interview with semi-structure, the interview items consist of 8 items questions that relate to the topic, the study was done to investigate the students' language attitude towards their heritage language and other languages that they acquire and learn, besides that. The researcher tends to know how valuable those languages are for the students (What are the values of each language?). In Data Analysis, the researcher identified and classified data based on the topic then interpreted and reported the data. The interpreted data used descriptive analysis by determining the frequency and percentage of the gathered data to answer two research questions that relate to students' language attitude towards the acquisition of language and students' value on the language that they acquire. In this stage, the researcher tried to interpret data from the source in descriptive analysis.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

### Students' language attitude towards acquisition and maintenance of heritage language

Knowing students' language attitude on heritage language and others language that they acquire make the researcher aware on how to keep the mother language, in this case, the researcher found that 100% respondents are proud of their heritage language, but only 25% who used heritage language in school, it is because of the language policy that has established at Al-Mansyuriyah, the language policy is regarding to the language use of foreign language in daily communication.as seen in Table 1.

**Table 1.** Language attitude toward acquisition and maintenance of heritage language

no	Statements	Javanese	Sundanese	Bangka	Jambi	Total
1	Pride of heritage language	25%	40%	15%	10%	100%
2	Use of HL in school	5%	10%	5%	5%	25%
3	Heritage maintenance	20%	30%	15%	15%	80%
4	The flexibility of HL	30%	30%	10%	10%	80%

From Table 1, the researcher found that 80% respondents are responsible to maintain the heritage language, and 80% students are aware that the heritage language that they have is easy to understand, and they use it in their home in holiday. To maintain the language, the respondents are practicing the language with parents in home, while in the school they did not use it because of language policy of institution to not use the heritage language in school to avoid the misinterpretation in communication.

### language domain of students at Al-Mansyuriyah

From the table above, the researcher found that foreign language (English and Arabic) is domain language that use in school. it can be seen from the table that 40% respondent use English, 35% use Arabic and only 25% use Bahasa Indonesia. The use of Foreign Language as domain language that used in Al-Mansyuriyah is regarded to the language policy that established in the school, the language policy implies that every student must use English and Arabic in daily communication, and the use of Bahasa Indonesia is allowed only in Sunday where they meet parents in the school.

**Table 2.** Language Domain of Students

No	Domain	Heritage language	National language	English (FL)	Arabic (FL)
1	School		25%	40%	35%
2	Family	40%	60%		
3	Playing zone	30%	70%		
4	Public area	25%	60%	10%	5%

Unlike the language that used in school, in the family, mostly the respondent used heritage language in their communication with the parents, and it indicate with 40% respondents used heritage language at home and 60% used BI in communication with family. Moreover. The language that used in playing zone is dominantly BI. And all participants used it in playing area where they must communicate each other. While in the public area, only 25% who used heritage language, 60% used BI, and 15% used foreign language to communicate.

Due to the findings above, students' language attitude commonly is positive on the acquisition or maintenance of heritage language and another language, in this case, the respondents have four languages including Heritage language, Bahasa Indonesia, English, and Arabic as a foreign language. (See table:2) They use foreign languages mostly in school where they communicate with friends, when the students are in their homes, they use heritage language with all members of the family, similar with the home and classes, the students are also able to acquire new languages in school area where they meet many other students in communication and get many sciences in another language such as English and Arabic. Those two foreign languages are acquired and used in the daily communication.

Furthermore, becoming multilingual students are giving prestige to the speakers where they must meet other people and understand the speaking easily. In this case, the students of Al-Mansyuriyah use a foreign language in communication and it is considered a domain language where the students mostly use English and Arabic in daily conversation among the speech community at school. Consequently, the heritage language is not used in the school community at all because of the school policy about language which forbids the students to use heritage language in school. Domain language is considered as the institutional context in which a language is used and organized into a specific role- relationship and this language use differ from one community to another (Joseph & Okphanaci, 2017)

In addition, the students considered that the languages that they acquire are valuable, including Heritage Language. Bahasa Indonesia. English and Arabic. By having more languages, they will have good careers in the future. Besides those languages, they still have intention to know more about language including korea and also Turkey which motivate them to know the world by being multilingual students.

Based on the interview data above, the students value and maintain the languages that they acquire by the following ways:

1. Practicing language (English and Arabic) every day in communication.

The school has established for all students to practice the language in all interactions, they use English and Arabic in daily conversation, while Bahasa Indonesia is used only in certain situations where they interact with teachers and parents. And heritage language is used in a particular event in school and in the hometown where they were on holiday.

2. Reading literature

The school provided a library with many kinds of literature and books which covers English literature, Arabic, Indonesian literature, and Heritage literature.

3. Watching the movie

The school shows the movie to emphasize students' ability in the language. Therefore, they have watched the movie based on their interest.

4. Listening to the music

The students are listening to the sound that plays for the students every Thursday, Tuesday, and Saturday morning, while they are listening to the music, they can acquire the language that the singer sang.

5. Joining language community

The students are interested to sharpen their language skills by joining the language community, and it is done to emphasize their ability in a foreign language.

6. Active in cultural and language events

This event is held by the school to show the culture from different regions in Indonesia, in this term, every student from different regions shows the heritage language and heritage culture to other students, and it's a way to practice the heritage language.

## CONCLUSIONS

The students' language attitude toward the acquisition or maintenance of heritage language among students of Al-Mansyuriyah is relatively good. Even though the language that they use mostly in communication is a foreign language, it is because of the language policy that has been decided and implemented at that school. In maintaining the heritage language, the students use it in their home to interact with family members when they got a holiday or vacation from a school activity, and it can be done twice a year only on school holidays. Because this school implements a school dormitory for every student then they must stay there during the learning process.

In addition, the students appreciated and loved the languages that they have including heritage language, the national language, and foreign language, they are proud to be multilingual where they can understand the material easily and do valorization among speakers. The valorization can be achieved well when they interact with society. and it can be concluded that they considered that the language that they have is very valuable for them, then they have to maintain it with many efforts such as practicing, listening to music, watching the movie, reading literature, and many others. And these efforts enable them to keep the languages that they acquire.

To sum up, acquiring language is very important, it can raise students' independence in socialization. The teacher can support students to learn the language and practice it as an effort to maintain that language, besides that, the way how students use the language also can be led by the teacher in getting good language and better implementation.

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