

# A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY ON THE STUDENTS' ATTITUDE TOWARD ENGLISH IN A MULTILINGUAL CLASSROOM

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**Abstract**— this study was a descriptive study on the students' attitude toward English in a multilingual classroom. The subject of the research were 15 students of 8 C in SMPN 2 Singkawang. The research method used was quantitative descriptive analysis by administering simple statistics that describe central tendencies and variation such as means and percentage. The questionnaire was adapted from Elisabeth E. Lefebvre (2012) in her research about the multilingual education. From the data analysis were found that the students' language background was varied in Malay, Indonesian, and Chinese language. The students' response indicates that they were happy when the teacher use English in the classroom. The same result also happen to the students' attitude toward Indonesian language. But, from the activity of language learning stated in the questionnaire, the students were happy when it comes to speaking activity, neutral in reading, and unhappy in writing activity.

**Keywords**— *Attitude, English, Multilingual*

## I. INTRODUCTION

Children acquire and learn the language naturally from those around them. Their language is influenced by parents and family. The more they learn the language the more they expose the language. Children are organizing representations of what they see and know. They have gained a language from whatever happens in their daily lives, they learn the language based on what they see, hear and know a few words. They have an effort to master those languages. Language is conceptualized naturally in the minds of children because of the people around them use the language actively with them in the environment.

Talking about multilingual education, Kalimantan Barat has high language diversity. There were various types of language used by its people such as Pontianak Malay, Sambas Malay and Senganan language distribution by region. Likewise, there are various types of Dayak languages, According to the Institute's research Dayakologi 188 dialects are spoken by the Dayak and Chinese languages such as Teochew and Khak/Hakka. Dialects which are intended to Dayak tribe's language is so much resemblance to Malay, only the most different at the end of words such as makan (Malay), makatn (Kanayatn), makai (Iban) and makot (Melahui).

The various types of language gives influence to the students and teachers instruction used in the classroom. Singkawang people use Indonesian as the primary language not only in conversation or trading, but they also use their own mother tongue. As Singkawang consists of three major ethnic groups, Chinese, Malays and Dayak, almost all of the Singkawang people use either Indonesian or Hakka Chinese for conversation; even some members of other ethnic groups use it, too. The Indonesian used in Singkawang commonly for daily conversation is not standard Indonesian, but has some Malay influence on vocabulary as Malay is the closest language to Indonesian and the Singkawang people have for years been accustomed to Malay.

Teaching English in Singkawang means that to have a multilingual class. A multilingual class is a class where the learners speak a variety of first languages. In a multilingual class there can be much more use of the target language, because it will be the only common language between the learners, who will use it for their normal interactions both in and out of class. Learner behavior and cultures can be very different, which may create problems but can be used as a focus of comparison and discussion.

This study focused on the students' attitude toward teaching English in a multilingual classroom in Singkawang. The site of the study was in SMPN 2 Singkawang, and the sample were taken from 8C class. This study is important to conduct in order to provide information related to the students language background, how many language that they know and they use in formal and informal situation, also to figure out their attitude towards English activities in the classroom.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Children can acquire and learn two or more languages from their environment, and it was called as Bilingualism. Bilingualism does not seem to be a problem case. Bilingualism may have multiple definitions. Bilingualism can be defined as the use of two languages [1]. Thus, bilingual should be able to speak two languages in which the non-native language as the original control. This means bilingualism must be capable of mastering two languages, in which non-native languages as original controls. Bilingualism is a competency in more than one language, which can be

taught at an individual and social level [2]. Bilingual competence may be obtained or studied whether as an individual level or social context. Bilingualism is an individual phenomenon; that is, it represents the achievement of one person immersed simultaneously in two or more language communities

In addition, bilingual individuals (sometimes able to use more than two languages i.e., have some bilingualism in various levels) can be contextual in a multi-lingual society where at least one language in bilingualism is widely shared. From the above statement, an interference can be drawn that bilingualism is the ability of speakers in using two languages, both in formal and informal situations. Competence using alternative language can be obtained in a formal context, such as education (in class) or in a social context.

#### *A. The Dimension of Multilingualism*

The term “multilingualism”, like the term “bilingualism,” is an umbrella term that may refer to the existence of more than one language with regard to:

1. language use (not further specified),
2. language competence of an individual
3. language situation of a geographical space.[3]

Every societal situation in which more than one language is present – regardless of the level – can be referred to as multilingual. Similarly, the concept of repertoire refers to all languages or language competences that a person has integrated during his or her lifetime.

The dimension of multilingualism can be distinguished into individual, social, proficiency and use dimension [4]. The phenomenon of individual and social in multilingualism cannot be separated. It can be considered as the ability of an individual in using the languages in society. It is more likely that the individual who lives in a multilingual community speaks more than language than the individual who lives in monolingual society. The individuals who speak more than one languages lives in the area where minority languages are spoken or in border areas. Individual multilingualism is sometimes referred to as plurilingualism [4]. Plurilingualism is the ability to use several languages, as an integrated whole, for the purposes of communication and to take part in intercultural action [5]. Further, plurilingualism is as the repertoire of varieties of language which many individuals use so that some individuals are monolingual and some are plurilingual [6]. In contrast, multilingualism is understood as “the presence in a geographical area, large or small, of more than one ‘variety of language’...; in such an area individuals may be monolingual, speaking only their own variety.” This distinction is the same as the most widely used distinction between individual and societal multilingualism.

In social dimension can be differentiate into additive and subtractive multilingualism [6]. In term of additive multilingualism, a language is added to the linguistic repertoire of the speaker while the first language continues to be developed. In the other hand, subtractive multilingualism refers to situations in which a new language is learned and replaces the first language. Additive multilingualism is more likely to happen when speakers of a majority language

acquire other languages; subtractive multilingualism can often be found when immigrant schoolchildren are required to shift to the language of the host country without being given the opportunity to develop their own language. A related issue is the difference between being multilingual in demographically strong languages with a high status and weaker languages [7].

The use dimension of multilingualism is often considered as the main characteristic when defining multilingual individuals. For example, “each individual currently practicing two (or more) languages, and able, where necessary, to switch from one language to the other without major difficulty, is bilingual (or plurilingual)”[8].

A distinction that brings together proficiency and use is that of receptive versus productive multilingualism. Receptive multilingualism “refers to the constellation in which interlocutors use their respective mother tongue while speaking to each other”. [9].

#### *B. Attitude*

There is a consensus among researchers when it defines attitudes as "the tendency to learn to respond consistently favorably or unfavorably with respect to the given object" [10] . However, the description of such an attitude does not eliminate the disagreements that exist among the researchers. "A closer examination of the description reveals some of the underlying ambiguities"[10] . For example, three basic notions of attitudes can be identified: the view that attitudes are learned, the belief that they are prone to action, and the idea that they are consistently favorable or unfavorable to the object [10]

Additionally, attitudes are distinguished in terms of three components, namely cognition, affect and behavior [11]. Further, cognitive component entails thought and beliefs about the world that influence attitude [11]. As example of the cognitive component when someone often think that a certain language will help them to get a higher-status job [12][. The second is affective component which concern with the feeling towards the language as the attitude object. The last is behavioral component determines how one will behave or is ready to behave, and this action taken by an individual is often, but not always, consistent with the cognitive and affective components [12]

In the context of a foreign language, positive or negative attitudes can have an effect on learning a new language. This is especially true if foreign language teaching and learning is recognized as a process that is not immersed in the classroom and, as might be expected, the use of language in real and social contexts may be a neglected field of development. It is important to consider students' attitudes toward English as "positive language attitudes let learners have a positive orientation toward learning English" [13], that is, attitudes are the decisive factor in EFL Learning because attitudes which is beneficial to English affects students with confidence and input given by the teacher can be properly transformed into more detailed output. Given the preceding considerations, much emphasis should be given to the role of student

attitudes in the context of a foreign language because the learner needs to be interested and interested in the target language, and the attitude shows this tendency.

### III. RESEARCH METHOD

This study was conducted in SMPN 2 Singkawang. Singkawang is a regency in Kalimantan Barat. The population of this research are 78 students divided in three classes. The researcher used purposive sampling in choosing the participant of the research. The sample were 15 students of 8 C. the students were chosen because at the time the researcher took the data it was the last day of the school day and the teacher manage to gather 15 students from 8 C class.

The Quantitative descriptive analysis was used by administering a self-developed questionnaire that consisted of statements which examine the students language background, language pattern, and they attitude toward bilingual class. Simple statistics that describe central tendencies and variation such as means and percentage was used to analyze the data from the questionnaire. The questionnaire were adapted from a study which related to the multilingualism. [14].

#### A. Research Questions

To fulfill the objectives of this study, the researcher set up the following research questions.

- What is the language background of most students in 8 C of SMPN 2 Singkawang?
- What is the students' attitude toward English in 8 C of SMPN 2 Singkawang?

#### B. Research Objectives

The objectives of this research are:

- To describe the language background of most students in 8 C of SMPN 2 Singkawang
- To determine the students' attitude toward bilingual class in 8 C of SMPN 2 Singkawang

### IV. FINDING AND DISCUSSION

#### A. Findings

There were fifteen students who participate in this research. They were divided into 6 males and 9 females. It took 30 minutes for the students to give response to all of the statements and questions in the questionnaire. The first question of this research was about the students' language background, and result showed that all of the students use different languages whether they are in their school and their house.

From the data gathered it was shown that 53.3% of the students use at least two languages, Indonesian language and their mother tongue language. There were also 46.7% students who use three languages, Indonesian languages in their school and also use two another languages in their house.

The percentage of the languages that the students use can be seen in the table below:

TABLE I. THE PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS' LANGUAGE BACKGROUND

No	Languages	Percentage
1	Indonesian	100%
2	English	13.3%
3	Malay	86.7%
4	Dayak	6.6%
5	Chinese	40%

From the table above, 100% the students of SMPN 2 Singkawang know and use Indonesian language. No matter whether they were Chinese, Dayaknese, or Malay ethnic. From 15 students there were 2 students are Dayaknese, 6 students are Chinese, and the rest are Malay ethnic. The Dayaknese students can speak Dayak, Malay and Indonesian language. The Chinese students can speak Chinese, Malay, and Indonesian language, there even one student can speak English as well. Meanwhile, the Malay students can speak Malay and Indonesian language.

Even though there were 100% of the sample speak Indonesian but it seems that Indonesian was not always used in school for some of the students. There were 80% students who use Indonesian in school and the rest 20% mix it with Malay language when their talking with their friends and the teachers. There were three students who keep using Malay rather than Indonesian in the school.

Meanwhile, very least of them who use Indonesian in their home. There were 13.3% of the students use Indonesian with their parents and the rest were using Malay, Dayak and Chinese language in their home. There were 20% of the sample who use both Indonesian and their mother tongue in home and 80% of the sample use their mother language only.

When the result of how many students use Indonesian language in their school and their home were not 100%, it might be caused that the longest language that they know. Means that the language that their parents or family use in their home were not Indonesian. From the data gathered through the questionnaire, it was revealed that 86.7% of the sample know their mother language longer than Indonesian, and it was only 1% of the sample who the longest language known are both in Indonesian and Malay. Related to English, there were 100% of the sample who know the language as the shortest to be known.

There is nothing much we can expect for the students to know English longer than their mother language or Indonesian, it was because 100% of the students learn English in their school. But, there were also 40% of the sample who learn English in their home, and it can be

indicate that these 40% of the sample have a private English instructor coming to their house.

Another causes that why the students use Malay more often in school were because they keep using Malay when they talk to their parents, brothers or sisters, and even friends in their home. This was showed by the percentage of the students who use

Malay, or Chinese language which higher than they use Indonesian language. The percentage were 20% of using Indonesian amongst parents and brothers and 80% using mother language. The same thing also happen when they are with their friends in the school or their home, there was 73.3% of the sample use Malay language. This is why when they talk with their friends and teachers, the samples keep using Malay language rather than Indonesian.

The next part of the questionnaire was about the students' attitude toward using English in the classroom. The scale were start from 1 for the very unhappy to 5 for very happy. The result shows that the students' attitude toward teacher who use Indonesian language and English was resulted almost in even percentage. There was 3.7 of the students' attitude scale for the teacher use Indonesian language in the classroom and 3.5 for the teacher use English. If 1 is categorized as very unhappy, and 5 unhappy, then 3.7 is moderately happy to happy and 3.5 is moderately happy.

From the students' response to the questionnaire, it was also found that mostly the students are happy when the teacher use Indonesian language in all of the activities including speaking, writing and reading activity. It was shown from the lower level of the students' response was in point 3 as moderately happy and the highest was 5 for very happy. In the other hand, the students' response for English used in the classroom were varied from 1 as the lowest level which is categorized as very unhappy to the highest level of 5 for very happy. Mostly the students feel very unhappy when the teacher use English in writing activity.

### B. Discussion

From the data description above, it can be seen that the languages that the students have can be divided into three large groups such as Indonesia, Malay, and Chinese. Those three languages then lead to the conclusion that the students who are from Malay ethnic speak Malay and Indonesian language, and who are from Chinese ethnic speak Indonesian, Chinese, Malay, and even English. It cannot be denied that Chinese and Malay are the two major languages other than Indonesian language which is highly used by the students. It is because Singkawang regency population was highly dominated by Malay and Chinese ethnic.

The reason why the students also use Malay in their school is because their home language influence their interaction with other in the school. There are several factors which influence someone in choosing the language such as sex, age, level of education, permanent-living time and homogeneity [15] Sex is divided into male and female; age is divided into less than 30 and more than 30. Level education can be broke down into Elementary, High School, and

University level. Permanent-living time is seen from the time they start to live in the city, which is divided into two times: before acculturation process promoted by government in 1977 and after 1977. Homogeneity covered the surrounding neighborhood of Chinese ethnic group, do they all hang out with Chinese ethnic, Chinese friends are more than Indonesian, amount of Chinese friends are in equal with Indonesia [15]

From the finding of the students' attitude, the response of the students indicate that they were moderately happy when the teacher use English in the classroom. The same result also happen to the students' attitude toward Indonesian language. Even though the students keep using Malay and Chinese language in their home, and also use Indonesian and Malay in school but they are happy when it comes to Indonesian and English. But, from the activity of language learning stated in the questionnaire, the students were happy when it comes to speaking activity, moderately happy in reading, and unhappy in writing activity.

In a research about exploring the opinions of a group of students enrolled in Andalusia bilingual program showed a positive result [16]. The students have positive opinions on bilingualism and the bilingual program; however they have negative attitudes regarding the intellectual and cognitive benefits of learning foreign languages.

### C. Conclusion

Knowing the students attitude toward English is very important for the policy makers to take account in designing the next program. Especially for the school with multi ethnicity and language background. In order to get the more data about bilingual classroom this study was needed to be developed to the deep and broader area. For example by knowing the language used by the teachers and did open-ended interview for both the teachers and students. from the discussion above it can be concluded that most of the students in 8 C SMPN 2 Singkawang use Malay language in their home, with their friends in their home, and mostly also use Malay language in the school. The students seems to have positive attitude when it was seen from the average of their response to the questionnaire. Even though there were differences, but it was not a significant difference among students response toward English and Indonesian language use in the classroom.

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