

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides a broad overview of the research including the background of the study, the formulation of the problem, the operational definition, the aim and the significance of the study.

1.1 Background of the Study

English is crucial for international communication because of its status as a lingua franca. Then, English is becoming a requirement for every student to face their future. Learning English is essential for students to help them with global learning and day-to-day living as they enhance their communication skills (Sya & Helmanto, 2020). Unfortunately, few Indonesian primary schools teach English because of revisions to the curriculum by *Permendikbud* No. 67 /2013. The policy prioritizes character development and native language competence, resulting in English being taught as an extracurricular and no longer included in the basic curriculum (Zein et al., 2020). This policy is still in place in the 2017 Revised 2013 Curriculum. However, based on a new regulation, *Permendikbudristek* No. 12/2024, English will become a compulsory subject for grade 3 students in elementary schools and is planned to be implemented starting in 2027 (Maurelia, 2024).

However, the absence of English education in elementary school means that most students only begin learning the English language in junior high school, leading to minimal background knowledge. English language learning at the junior high school level, where students have their tendencies, some students are interested in learning and some others are not interested in learning English. Meanwhile, attitudes are one of the success factors in language learning. It includes students' feelings, beliefs, and behavior tendencies (Herawati et al., 2021; Pasang & Harbi, 2023; Seni & Lekatompessy, 2021; Zulfikar et al., 2019). A case arises in English language learning in eighth grade where most students demand the use of their mother tongue, which is Indonesian and Sundanese, and also struggles with English proficiency. They tend to ask their English teachers to explain the material and give

instructions in their mother tongue for easy understanding. In addition, these students have a low level of proficiency as seen from the learning results where the test scores are still lower than the English minimum standard score of 70 for eighth grade. Considering the students' condition might affect their language attitude, in this study researcher intends to investigate and find out the students' language attitudes toward English.

As a foreign language, one of the challenges that becomes a problem is attitudes in learning English (Susanto et al., 2020). According to Hanifah (2020), Students' attitudes to learning English are one factor that shows their achievement and identity. In addition, Gardner (1985a) as cited in Baker (1992) stated ability in a language and attitudes towards a language are interrelated, the higher the achievement of proficiency in a language, the better the attitudes. Unquestionably, researchers continue to find the attitudes toward learning English to be an intriguing subject to dig into and offer fresh hypotheses for English teaching and learning methods (Seni & Lekatompessy, 2021). In addition, Liu (2018) stated that language attitudes are becoming a major focus in studies due to their adaptability to changing times and places even though they are becoming outdated.

Various researchers have conducted language attitudes studies, including studying attitudes toward Indonesian, English, and other languages at both secondary and university levels aimed at identifying students' language attitudes toward English language learning. The first study conducted by Yuliani (2023), reveals a positive attitude of ten students of a post-graduate program toward English language learning, and the attitude also influenced their achievement and motivation in learning English. Akbarjono (2022), conducted a study aimed at discovering and describing seventh-grade students' attitudes toward EFL learning and the result showed the students have a positive attitude, especially on the behavioral aspect and most students perceive teaching methods, discipline, and teacher motivation as factors that encourage them to be motivated to learn English as a whole or without emphasize on certain skills. Lastly, a research conducted by Fitria (2022) aimed at identifying students' attitudes toward learning English in the eleventh grade and resulted in students exhibiting a positive attitude towards

learning English, encompassing cognitive, affective, and behavioral aspects, with the affective attitude being the most dominant.

Several studies related to students' language attitudes at particular levels of education reveal positive and negative attitudes toward the English language with various factors influencing such as motivation, teaching method, and others. Students' demand for the use of their mother tongue in learning English, combined with their low English proficiency, provides a challenge that might significantly affect their language attitude toward learning English. Therefore, this current study aims to investigate eighth-grade students' language attitudes toward English language learning focusing on affective, behavioral, and cognitive aspects of attitude.

1.2 Formulation of the Problem(s)

The research question of this study is “How were the EFL students' language attitudes toward English language learning ?”

1.3 Operational Definitions

The researcher provides the definitions related to this study to avoid misunderstanding about the terms set out in this study :

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| 1.3.1 | Language Attitudes | A student's positive or negative response to English language learning is based on students' feelings students' behavior and students' perceptions of English language learning |
| 1.3.2 | Mother Tongue | The first language a student learns at home from parents or other primary caregivers. Based on students' environment, mother tongue refers to Indonesian and Sundanese language. |
| 1.3.3 | EFL Students | Students who learn English as a Foreign Language in Indonesia at eighth-grade in the junior high school level |

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| 1.3.4 | English Language Learning | The process of acquiring knowledge and skills of the English language through study, practices, and instruction from a formal environment. |
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1.4 Aim(s) of the Research

The objective of this study is to determine and acknowledge the language attitudes of EFL students towards English language learning, with a particular focus on their affective, behavioural and cognitive attitudes.

1.5 Significance of the Study

By conducting this research, the writers hope that this research can give insights and be useful for the teachers, the students, the institution, and other researchers in this topic area.

1.5.1 Theoretical Use:

The findings of this research are expected to provide insights and enrich the existing literature on the EFL students' language attitudes in the English language learning. The result of the study can provide information related to students' language attitudes. The results of this study are expected to be the latest reference in the topic of student language attitude.

1.5.2 Practical Use:

The present study has the potential to enhance the awareness of English teachers, students, and other researchers concerning students' language attitudes towards English language teaching and learning, particularly at the junior high school level. It is expected that these findings will serve as a valuable reference and a point of reference for teachers when preparing lesson plans. Furthermore, it is posited that this study may also serve as a source of inspiration for other researchers to explore new research topics.

1.5.3 Empirical Use:

The study contributes to research on language attitudes and to the field of English language learning. Furthermore, it is to be noted that the present text may be utilised as a source of reference for the purpose of conducting further research.