

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter presents: (1) the concept of attitude, (2) language learning attitudes, (3) English proficiency, and (4) previous related studies, and (5) hypotheses.

2.1 The Concept of Attitude

Attitude is a word that is part of our commonsense language. It was derived from the Latin *aptus*, which means ‘fit and ready for action’. This ancient meaning refers to something that is directly observable, such as the way fighter moves in a boxing ring. This is embodied in Allport’s (1935, p.798) classic definition. According to Allport (1935), Attitude is “a mental or neural state of readiness, organized through experience, exerting a directive or dynamic influence upon the individual’s response to all objects and situation with which it is related” (p. 810).

Scholl (2002) pointed out that an attitude is a mental predisposition to act that is expressed by evaluating a particular entity with some degree of favor or disfavor (as cited in Venita, 2013, p.13). Montano and Kasprzyk’s (2008) explained that:

Attitude is determined by the individual’s belief outcomes or attributes of performing by behaviour (behavioural beliefs), weighted by evaluation of those outcomes and attributes. Thus, a person who holds strong beliefs that positively valued outcomes will result from performing the behaviour will have a positive attitude toward behaviour. Conversely, a person who holds strong beliefs that

negatively valued outcomes will result from the behaviour will have a negative attitude. (as cited in Venita, 2013, p. 13)

Hogg and Vaughan (2011) defined the term attitude as “a relatively enduring organization of beliefs, feelings and behavioral tendencies towards social, significant object, groups, events or symbols” (p.148). “An attitude is ‘relatively enduring’ because it is learned. Because it is learned, it can be unlearned. Because it is learned, it can be taught. Liking a foreign language is learned. No student is born liking or disliking it” (Oroujlou & Vahedi. 2011, p. 997). Hogg and Vaughan (2011) also defined it as a general feeling or evaluation—positive or negative—about some person, object or issue (p.148). According to Asher and Simpson (1994), attitude is a disposition or tendency to respond positively or negatively toward certain things, such as idea, object, person, and situation (p.254). Likewise, Rohliah (2015) illustrated that:

People, who have positive attitudes, will likely view the object valuable, while those who have negative attitudes will likely view the object invaluable. For example, someone has positive attitude toward English subject; it means that he/she likes this subject and tries to talk in English whenever it is possible, frequently studies hard on English and is rarely absent in English class. It shows that attitude can be recognized from the visible behavior. (p. 24)

2.1.1 Components of Attitude

Based on McLeod (2014), attitudes consist of three components, *cognitive*, *affective*, and *behavioral and evaluative*. This three-component model is also

known as ABC model of attitudes (para. 3). Rohliah (2015) then defined them as the following:

First, *affective component*, it refers to the feeling with respect to the focal object, such as fear, liking, or anger. Second, *behavioral component*, it deals with the way one behaves and reacts in particular situations. Behavioral intentions are the goals, aspirations, and the expected responses to the attitude object. Third, *cognitive component*, it involves the beliefs of the language learners about the knowledge that they receive and their understanding in the process of language learning. This component is divided into four steps of connecting the previous knowledge and the new one, creating new knowledge, checking new knowledge, and applying the new knowledge in many situations. (p. 25)

2.1.2 Characteristics of Attitude

Gardner (1985) discussed five main characteristics of attitudes:

(1) Attitudes are cognitive (i.e. are capable of being taught about) and affective (i.e. have feelings and emotions attached to them); (2) Attitudes are dimensional rather than bipolar – they vary in degree of favorability/unfavorability; (3) Attitudes predispose a person to act in a certain way, but the relationship between attitudes is not the strong one; (4) Attitude is learnt, not inherited or genetically endowed. Since it learnt, it can be caught. Reinforcement and imitation process are believed to represent the processes which are involved in the learning of attitude; (5) Attitudes tend to persist but they can be modified by experience. (p.39-49)

2.1.3 Function of Attitude

The development or formation of attitudes may be a consequence of a range of different motives the person has. They are developed, maintained and may change because of the functions they serve. Katz (1960) suggested that every attitude serves at least one of four functions:

a. Adaptive:

The attitude helps us to avoid unpleasant things and obtain desirable things.

b. Knowledge:

The attitude helps us to understand the otherwise overwhelming amount of information in the world. They are short-cuts, helping us to simplify our perceptions of the world so that it becomes more manageable, predictable and safer.

c. Self-expressive (*sometimes ego-expressive*):

Attitude helps us to relate to ourselves and to others, presenting a fairly unified image with which others can interact and which help to establish our identity for both ourselves and for others.

d. Ego-defensive:

Attitude helps to protect us from ourselves and from others, to explain why we have done something that could be seen as undesirable. (as cited in Hogg and Voughan, 2011 p.150)

Fazio (1989) later argued that the main function of any kinds of attitude is utilitarian: that of project appraisal (as cited in Hogg and Vaughan, 2011, p.150). Hogg and Vaughan (2011) believed that, this should hold regardless of whether the attitude has a positive or negative valence (i.e. whether our feelings about the object are good or bad). Merely possessing an attitude is useful because of the orientation towards the object that it provides for the person. They exemplified, “having a negative attitude toward snakes (but believing they are dangerous) is useful if we cannot differentiate between safe and deadly varieties. However, for an attitude truly to fulfill this function it must be accessible”(p. 150).

2.1.4 Formation of Attitude

Hogg and Vaughan (2010) defined that there are three processes of forming attitude; experiences, source of learning, and self-perception.

a. Experience

Many attitudes arise from direct experience with attitude object. Direct experience informs about attribute of an object and helps to shape beliefs that influence how much a person like or dislike it. There are several explanation for its effect: (a) Mere exposure. Simply experiencing something several times can affect how someone evaluates it; (b) Classical conditioning. Is repeated involvement which may cause a formerly neutral stimulus to elicit a reaction that was previously elicited only by another stimulus; and (c) Instrumental conditioning. Behaviour with positive consequences is reinforced and

it is more likely to be repeated, whereas behaviour with negative consequences is not.

b. Source of learning

A crucial source of attitudes is the actions of the people around. One person's behaviour is a template for another's. Individuals learn new responses, not by directly experiencing positive or negative outcomes but by observing what happens to others.

c. Self-perception

This Theory proposed by Daryl Bem (1967). People gain knowledge about who they are, and their attitudes, by examining their own actions and asking: 'Why did i do that?'. A person may act for reasons that are not really clear and so determine their attitude from the most readily available cause. But there may be other reasons not taken into account. This theory suggests that people act, and form attitudes, without much deliberate thinking. (p. 95-97)

2.2 Language Learning Attitude

Rohliah (2015) asserted that, "attitudes are inseparable from language learning, specifically English as a foreign language" (p. 24). As Venita (2013) pointed, "attitude in learning English is the belief that the students hold when they are learning English" (p.13). Richard and Schmidt (2002) defined language attitude as "the attitudes which speakers of different languages or language varieties have towards each other's languages or to their own language" (p.286).

Karahan (2007) stated that, “positive language attitudes let learner have positive orientation towards learning English. As such, attitudes may play a very crucial role in language learning as they would appear to influence students’ success or failure in their learning” (p.84). Based on Gardner (1985), the learners’ attitude towards the target language group will affect their success in learning that language (p. 40). It means either positive or negative attitudes to language learning are influenced by many factors (Rohliah, 2015, p.24). Venita (2013) perceived that according to Ellis (1994):

The learner’s attitude toward the target language informs the determination with which the learner can tackle challenges in the target language. Normally, learners manifest different attitudes toward the target language, target language speakers, the target language culture, the social value of learning the second language, particular uses of target language, and themselves as members of their own culture. He said that learners’ attitudes have an impact on the level of L2 proficiency achieved by individual learners and are themselves influenced by this success. (p.13-14)

2.2.1 Principal Components of Language Learning Attitude

According to Brown (2000), self-esteem (self-image), inhibition, risk-taking, ego permeability, and tolerance of ambiguity are among the variables that may account for EFL learners’ success or failure.

Mahir (2004) pointed that, “learner who have principal components such as being risk-takers, possess high tolerance of ambiguity, less inhibited, carry positive self-image, and have a lower degree of ego permeability, would most probably form more positive learning attitudes” (p. 18).

Based on Alavinia and Salmasi (2012), principal components of language learning attitude are self-image, inhibition, risk-taking, ego-permeability, and ambiguity tolerance. (p.91)

2.2.1.1 Self Image

Coopersmith (1967) described self-image is as a personal judgment of worthiness that is expressed in the attitudes that individuals hold towards themselves (p.4-5). According to Mahir (2004), learners with positives self-image tend to have strong self-confidence, enthusiasm, and optimistic nature towards learning a language (p.6). Meanwhile those who have negative self-image, as Rohliah (2015) added, “are recognized to have inferior feeling, lack the encouragement and enthusiasm for life, prefer to postpone anything, have negative thoughts and emotions, are shy and like to be lonely, tend to think of self-satisfaction, such as smoking and overeating” (p. 26).

Self-image is also associated with self-esteem. According to Berndt (1997), self-esteem is the part of self-concept or self-image that deals with positive or negative feelings about one’s competence and value as a person (as cited in Rohliah, 2015, p. 26). Academic and Staff Assistance Program (ASAP) describes the different characteristics of learners who have high self-esteem and low self-esteem.

Table 1. High and Low Self-Esteem Learner

High Self-Esteem Learner	Low Self-Esteem Learner
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confidence • Self-direction • Non-blaming behaviour • An awareness of personal strengths • An ability to make mistakes and learn from them • An ability to accept mistakes from others • Optimism • An ability to solve problems • An independent and cooperative attitude • Feeling comfortable with a wide range of emotions • An ability to trust others • A good sense of personal limitations • Good self-care • The ability to say no 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Negative view of life • Perfectionist attitude • Mistrusting others – even those who show sign of affection • Blaming behaviour • Fear of taking risks • Feeling of being unloved and unlovable • Dependence – letting others make decisions • Fear of being ridiculed

2.2.1.2 Inhibition

Inhibition is defined by Naeni and Pandian (2010) as another personality factor that is closely related to the notion of self-esteem is that by building sets of defenses around their ego, humans try to protect themselves from

threats to their self-esteem (p.101). Rohliah (2015) referred inhibition, based on Kazumata (1999), to the degree to which individual allow their ego boundary to be open to a new set of knowledge and value systems. Hence, the lower the inhibitions (defenses), the higher self-esteem and the stronger the ego is (p.27).

In the context learning, Mahir (2004) stated that, “inhibition is linked with negative attitudes that prevent learners from learning another language due to the belief that they are incapable of performing well in any language practice” (p.7). According to Mahir (2004), the characteristics of the learners with high inhibition are as follows:

- a. They have too much fear of making mistakes
- b. They cannot understand the learning style of making mistakes as the norm of learning.
- c. They do not receive the practice necessary to reach linguistic fluency. (p.20)

2.2.1.3 Risk-Taking

Risk-taking is described by Alavinia and Salmasi (2012) as “risk-taking in terms of learners’ tendency for active class participation as well as their willingness to communicate even in circumstances in which they are uncertain of the verity of their hunches” (p.94). Dehbozorgi (2012) also stated that risk-taking is directly related to not being afraid to make mistakes and allowing students to take risks is essential to their learning (p.42). Zakir and Meenakshi (2012) viewed risk-taking as a crucial interactive process to learn a language in the ESL/EFL

classroom (p.36). Ashouri and Fotovatnia (2010) examined the effects of risk-taking and tolerance on learners' translation beliefs in EFL learning. The result revealed that participants had positive beliefs about translation but the effect of risk-taking was negative on translation beliefs. As a result, risk-averse learners had positive beliefs about translation, on the other hands, risk takers were found to have negative beliefs about it.

According to Jonassen and Grabowski (1993), the characteristics of risk-taking people and cautious people are as follows:

Table 2. Characteristics of Risk Takers

Risk Takers	Cautious People
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be process-oriented • To have tolerance for errors • To like to try out new things • Tend to use more complex structures in their production • Tend to accept more errors • Have tendency to be less accurate in their productive skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To be predict-oriented • To possess low tolerance for errors • To be impatient with trial and error

(as cited in Kiany and Pournia, 2006, p.145)

2.2.1.4 Ego Permeability

Mahir (2004) described ego permeability as willingness to allow someone's perception of the self to extend to being a speaker of language of a foreign language (p. 21-22). Ego permeability is also defined by Ellis (1994) as the extent to which L2 learners perceive their L1 to have fixed and rigid or

permeable and flexible boundaries and therefore the extent to which they are inhibited (p. 232). Rohliah (2015) summarised that, people who have highly permeable language egos do not feel their native language is threatened by the learning of an additional language (p. 29).

Ego permeability is closely related to language ego which was introduced by Guiora (1972). He claimed that this can occur when the learner is aware of limitations and boundaries of language; for example, the difference among sounds and production of English (as cited in Rohliah, 2015, p. 29).

Keeley (2014) on his study about self-identity and ego permeability in foreign culture adaptation and foreign language acquisition argued that the higher one's score in language permeability, the more likely one will succeed in learning foreign languages. He also claimed that the learners with high language ego permeability have some characteristics (p.7) such as:

- a. The learners tend to feel comfortable in developing new cultural and language identities.
- b. They are categorized emphatic learners.
- c. They are willing to mimic native speaker of the target language.
- d. They have sufficient confidence in their language learning abilities.

2.2.1.5 Tolerance of Ambiguity

Ely (1989) defined ambiguity as one's acceptance of confusing situation and lack of clear lines of demarcation (p. 437). According to Norton

(1975), the causes of ambiguity are summarized as follow: (1) multiple meanings, (2) vagueness, incompleteness, or fragmentation, (3) a probability, (4) unstructured, (5) lack of information, (6) uncertainty, (7) inconsistencies and contradiction, and (8) unclear (as cited in Ely, 1989, p.438).

Brown (2000) stated that “an ambiguity tolerance refers to the degree to which you are cognitively willing to tolerate ideas and prepositions that run counter to your own belief system or structure of knowledge” (p.119).

Mahir (2004) stated that the higher the tolerance for the unfavorable environment, the stronger the learner’s persistence level toward language learning (p. 8). He also described that learner with high tolerance for ambiguity could make predictable, near-accurate contextual guess without having to indentify and understand every last detail of a sentence they hear in the target language (p. 23).

2.3 English Proficiency

Chamber (2007) defined language proficiency as the language ability or ability in language use (p.88). Bachman and Clark (1987) used the term “ability” to refer both to the knowledge, or competence, involved in language use and to the skill in implementing that knowledge, and the term “language use” to refer to both productive and receptive performance (p.21). The conceptualization of the nature of language proficiency has a major impact on a variety of practical and policy issues in education (Allan, Swain, Cummins & Harley, 1990, p.8). Richard and Schmidt (2002) defined clearly that language proficiency is the degree of skill

with which a person can use a language, such as how well a person can read, write, speak, or understand language (p.292).

To be considered truly proficient, one should have advanced abilities in all area of communication. It can be said that English proficiency is the ability to understand English as it is spoken and written. In other words, English proficiency is the quality of having great facility and competency in English mastery. In Indonesia, to measure students' English proficiency, TOEFL (Test of English as Foreign Language) is usually used.

The TOEFL Junior® Standard test is an objective and reliable measure of English communication skills. While the ETS university-level TOEFL test continues to set the standard for the measurement of English-language proficiency worldwide, the TOEFL Junior Standard test measures the degree to which students in middle school and lower levels of high school have attained proficiency in the academic and social English-language skills representative of English-medium instructional environments. (TOEFL Junior Handbook, 2015, p2).

Gu (2014) stated that TOEFL Junior Test is a proficiency assessment of English as a foreign language for young learners age 11 and above. It measures both social and academic language uses in English-medium instructional environments, using tasks representative of the school context (p. 25).

The junior high school students are average 14 years old after graduated. And then, the senior high schools are average from 15 to 19 years old. Therefore, TOEFL Junior test is not only suitable for senior high school students, but also suitable for all of the students who are more than eleven years old.

2.4 Previous Related Studies

Tseng (2013) conducted a study in which investigated the relationship between the English proficiency level of students of English as a foreign language (EFL) and their attitudes toward foreign culture, addressing personal, school, family, social, and ethnic perspective. The study comprised 90 Taiwanese students who were divided into two groups: high-proficiency and low-proficiency learners. The result showed a significant correlation between the English proficiency levels of the high-proficiency learners and their attitudes toward culture. Among the 5 examined factors, the result demonstrated significant correlation among the personal, family, and ethnic factors. Regarding the low-proficiency learners, no significant correlation was demonstrated in the attitudes towards culture and none of the factors exhibited significant different.

Burden (2015) examined Japanese university students' antecedent belief about English education from high school. He stated that affective beliefs about previous learning experiences mean that university students can become unreceptive to current language learning so that many seem to decide that success in language learning is not far from them. In this study, 217 low achieving students who scored among 250 on a TOEFL class placement test in a tertiary institution in Western Japan were asked, after a semester compulsory English, to reflect their language learning in high school. Through open and closed-item question of survey, students' reflected on their perceived English ability, the frequency of feelings of testing in high school, how much effort they placed on learning, their feeling of success and failure in the testing, the amount of teacher

praise and, finally, whether they liked or disliked English. The results offered a useful gauge of current affective influences on motivation to continue learning English. This study proved that negative attitude on language learning could result on low-English proficiency. Hence, it could be a big source for the teacher of English to use proper approaches and strategies to change it.

Meanwhile, Venita (2013) found that there was no significant correlation between English learning attitude and English proficiency of 131 students of Mining engineering Department of Sriwijaya University. The result said that among three kinds of students' attitude toward learning English (attitude toward English, attitude in socio-linguistics and socio-psychological, and attitude in self-esteem, self-efficacy, self confidence), only attitude toward English that gave significant contribution to students' English proficiency.

Taking into consideration about the literature has documents concerning the correlation among foreign language learning attitudes and English proficiency, I was eager to conduct a study in the same fields but with different sample.

2.5 Hypothesis

The hypotheses of this study are proposed to the form of null and research hypotheses below:

1. H_0 : There is no correlation between language learning attitude and English proficiency of Students at SMA N Sumatera Selatan.
 H_1 : There is correlation between language learning attitude and English proficiency of students at SMA N Sumatera Selatan.

2. H_0 : There is no significant influence between language learning attitude and the students' English proficiency at SMA N Sumatera Selatan.

H_1 : There is significant influence between language learning attitude and the students' English proficiency at SMA N Sumatera Selatan.