

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter describes: (1) background, (2) the problems of the study, (3) the objectives of the study, and (4) the significance of the study.

1.1 Background

Seidlhofer (2005) stated that, “the term ‘English as a lingua franca’ has emerged as a way of referring to communication in English between speakers with different first language” (p.336). As Firth (1996) described, “it is a ‘contact language’ between person who share neither a common native tongue nor common (national) culture, and for whom English is the chosen foreign language of communication” (p.240).

English now is widely used in all aspect of life such as diplomacy and international communication, tourism, business, education, science, computer technology, media and internet. That is to say, students are expected to master it as lingua franca or as a source of knowledge. According to Azkiyah and Mukminin (2017), in every institution students are trained to be academically successful (as cited in Afriliani & Holandyah, 2018, p. 76). English, Ali, Mokhtar and Kamaruzaman (2009) noted, is also “plays an important role in producing the best quality graduates” (as cited in Afriliani & Holandyah, 2018, p. 77). Likewise, Indonesia as a developing and non-English speaking country (Erlina, et al., 2018, p.112) expects the students to do so.

But how do students respond toward this demand? Do they like it? Or do they feel forced to do it? And how does it affect their English? These questions arise.

Asking how someone like or dislike something is also called “the attitude” of a certain thing. Attitude, based on Latchanna and Dagnev (2009), is accepted as an important concept to understand human behaviour and is defined as a mental state that includes beliefs and feelings (para.1). Baker (1992) defined attitude as a hypothetical construct used to explain the direction and persistence of human behavior (p.10). In other words, it can represent someone’s feeling, thought, and tendency toward something.

This paper will focus on language learning attitude and this study will focus on English learning attitude. The belief and feeling or, as Baker (1992) exemplified, a favourable attitude to language learning might be a vital input language achievement. In relation to English learning, it can be defined, in general, as the way someone thinks and feels about English, whether it’s positive or negative (p.12). Students with positive attitudes will spend more effort to learn the language by using strategies such as asking question, volunteering information, and answering questions (Baker, 1992, p.19). According to Lennartson (2008), students’ belief can be an obstacle if they believe that they cannot learn the new language successfully (p.17).

According to Karahan (2007), positive language attitudes let learner have positive orientation toward learning English. As such, attitudes may play a very crucial role in language learning as they would appear to influence students’

success in their learning (p.84). According to Shams (2008), in foreign language learning context, attitude is one of factors that influence the English proficiency along with motivation, anxiety, learning achievement, aptitudes, intelligence, age, etc (as cited in Kartubi, 2017, p.3).

A study conducted by Abidin, Mohammad and Alzwari (2012) showed that there was a significant difference in the respondents' attitudes toward learning English based on gender, field of study (*Basic Science, Life Sciences, and Social Sciences*) and year of study. Solemani and Hanafi (2013) whose study involved 40 non-English major students in Iran found that the students hold highly positive attitude regarding English language learning. In contrary, Rohliah (2015) showed the result that the correlation between students' language learning attitudes and their English proficiency was not significant although she stated that the students' ego permeability did have a significant correlation with English proficiency.

These previous studies give different results as the variables vary although they are still talking about the same language learning attitude. That is to say, I wanted to know what the result would be if the subject were changed into high school students. Also, the attitude of language learning would be compared to the students' English proficiency where it refers to the ability to listen, speak, write and read in English.

With all these consideration and curiosity, I was interested to write a research entitled *Correlation between Language Learning Attitude and English Proficiency of High School Students of SMA Negeri Sumatera Selatan Palembang* for completing undergraduate degree in English education study program.

1.2 Problems of Study

The problems of the study are formulated in these following questions:

1. Is there any significant correlation between language learning attitude of students at SMA N Sumatera Selatan and their English proficiency?
2. Is there any significant influence between language learning attitude and the students' English proficiency at SMA N Sumatera Selatan?

1.3 Objectives of Study

Based on the problems above, the objectives of the study are:

1. To find out whether or not there is significant correlation between language learning attitude of the students at SMA N Sumatera Selatan and their English proficiency.
2. To find out whether or not there is any significant influence between language learning attitude and the students' English proficiency at SMA N Sumatera Selatan.

1.4 Significance of the Study

The result of this study hopefully would give some benefits to the teachers at SMA Sumatera Selatan Palembang so that they can apply appropriate strategies to teach English course by taking into consideration students' learning attitudes. It is expected that the students who have been involved in this study will be aware of

their learning attitudes towards English. Finally, this study hopefully was able to give valuable information to enrich my curiosity and also a valuable knowledge for further research.