

# Chapter I

## Introduction

### 1. Background of The Study

Language attitude is a field of study aiming to reveal feelings, perceptions, preferences, and many other internal things of either an individual or a group of people towards one or more languages; it can be the mother tongue or a foreign language (Crystal, as cited in McKenzie, 2010). Someone's attitudes towards variations of English are considered important because they tend to: affect judgements over them, guide behaviour towards them, and be resistant to change (Perloff, as cited in McKenzie, 2010). Attitudes of a certain group of people, i.e. Indonesian university students majoring in English in this case, may also create an ideology. Finding out the ideology of a language or of variations of it is considered helpful in understanding the politics of it. Language ideology has been a focus of sociolinguists in recent years in multilingual situations, especially when there are language variations like in English (McKenzie, 2010).

In Indonesia, debates about preferences over varieties of English exist and they relate to many other social issues. Schools and institutions offer native-speakers as teachers with a promise that the students learning there would produce native-like English (Gunawan, as cited in Lauder, 2008). University students avoid several varieties because of their distinct features compared to native-varieties and

acknowledge some of them as erroneous or broken, e.g. Singaporean English<sup>1</sup>. Perceptions and preferences seem to exist among Indonesian people despite them being English speakers as a foreign language. Meanwhile, perceptions and preferences create stereotypes which are not always near the realities (McKenzie, 2010). On the other side, experts have long been worried that English could give undesirable influence to Indonesian culture. There seems to be some ambivalence in the status of English in Indonesian regulations. Kartono (as cited in Lauder, 2008) argued that irrational dimensions of national language policy of a certain foreign language might result negatively in national development.

Those points urge out the need to study Indonesian people's attitudes toward variations of English, i.e. English speeches in this case, in order to build clearer picture of current situation around English and its stereotypes in Indonesia. However, this type of study is rare in Indonesia. The only one found is from Fenty L. Siregar in 2010. She investigated the attitudes of a number of Indonesian university students majoring in English from a single university towards Southeast Asian varieties of English. It used only direct approach, i.e. questionnaire, and also excluded the speech variety from Indonesia itself. Hence, this study is conducted using mixed approach (direct and indirect) towards six English speech variations including Indonesia and targets students majoring in English from 3 (three) universities.

---

<sup>1</sup> Witnessed by the researcher herself during her study in university for almost four years.

## **2. Research Questions**

The question of this study is, “How are the attitudes of Indonesian university students majoring in English towards varieties of English speech?” However, it would be identified further in several problem identifications, which are:

1. What are the attitudes of Indonesian university students majoring in English towards varieties of English speech?
2. Do Indonesian university students majoring in English recognize the varieties of English speech? Which varieties are the most recognizable and un-recognizable?
3. What variables (if any) appear to be significant in determining their attitudes and ability to recognise varieties of English speech?

## **3. Purpose of The Study**

This study aims to investigate the attitudes of Indonesian university students majoring in English towards varieties of English speech, their ability to recognize the varieties of English speech, as well as the variables determining their attitudes and recognition ability.

## **4. Scope and Limitation**

This study concentrates on attitudes towards language/speech variation and preference. It focuses on listeners’ attitudes towards six English speakers representing speech varieties of six selected countries including Indonesia. It involves average

number of respondents, which are all Indonesian university students majoring in English.

## **5. Significance of The Study**

Theoretically, this study would enrich findings of previous research on and would contribute to the development of language attitudes study towards varieties of English, especially in Indonesia. It would also benefit the English Department of Universitas Negeri Jakarta in a sense that it could diversify research issues and findings of as well as its lessons and lectures. Practically, this study helps the researcher broadening her horizon on language attitudes study towards varieties of English in general and helps getting her bachelor degree in particular.

## **6. Previous Related Studies**

A great number of researches on English language attitudes have been done in recent years. However, most of them focused on attitudes of native speakers (Ellis; Dalton-Puffer et al., as cited in McKenzie, 2010). Below are three previous studies on language attitudes towards varieties of English from the perspective of Asian speakers as non-native ones; being from South Korea, Japan, and Indonesia. These are not the only ones available but are considered enough to be pilot studies for this study. They are chosen because of their useful features.

Kim Young Soo (2007) conducted a research on language attitudes towards varieties of English in South Korea. He investigated 40 educated office workers of a medium-sized newspaper company in Daegu. He focused his research on perceptions of native and non-native varieties. The varieties were based on Kachru's model of English, i.e. American and British English in the Inner Circle, Hong Kong and Indian English in the Outer Circle, and Korean and Taiwanese-accented English in the Expanding Circle. The techniques applied were a combination of questionnaire and verbal-guise test. The VGT used the same prescribed text to be read by the six speakers. He also put the dialect recognition item. His findings mainly suggest that (1) South Korean adults preferred American English but did not differentiate native and non-native varieties, (2) they regarded English as an international language, and (3) they were not well aware of varieties of English.

Robert M. McKenzie (2010) conducted a large-scale longitudinal research on language attitudes on English-learners in Japan towards varieties of English which has been printed as an educational linguistics book. He investigated 558 university students from various majors on 11 universities in 8 cities. He focused his research on perceptions of standard vs. non-standard, native vs. non-native varieties, and competence vs. attractiveness. The varieties are Mid-West United States English, Southern United States English, Scottish Standard English, Glasgow Vernacular, Moderately-accented Japanese English, and Heavily-accented Japanese English. They were based on a combination of numerous theories and previous studies. The

techniques applied were a combination of questionnaire and verbal-guise test, but the VGT guises are of spontaneous speech to a planned setting. He put the dialect recognition as well as perceptual dialectology item. Perceptual dialectology<sup>2</sup> is a means to get respondents' perceptions of varieties among their first language, i.e. Japanese. His findings mainly suggest that (1) US varieties are more identifiable than UK and Heavily-accented Japanese English are more identifiable than Moderately-accented one, (2) the more competence a variety the less attractive it is and vice versa, (3) respondents' gender, level of self-perceived competence in English and level of exposure to English affect their attitudes. There are still some unmentioned findings<sup>2</sup> related to pedagogical and sociological fields of study.

The only research found on attitudes towards varieties of English from Indonesia is the one by Fenty L. Siregar. Although her research was published in the Philippine ESL Journal in 2010, she conducted it in Indonesia. She investigated attitudes of 108 students of the English Department of Maranatha Christian University in Bandung. Her research was focused on preferences over, relationship among, and contextual usage of native varieties vs. Southeast Asian varieties. The varieties (American English, British English and Englishes in Southeast Asia: Philippine English, Singaporean English, and Malaysian English) were based on Kachru's model of English. The technique applied was the traditional direct approach. Her findings suggest that (1) native varieties are perceived more positively

---

<sup>2</sup> Please see the book for further details.

than Southeast Asian varieties and (2) there is no correlation between the attitudes towards American English and British English in terms of favourability, while the attitudes towards Malaysia English relates strongly to those towards Philippine, Singaporean, and British English.