

Students' Attitudes Toward The Indonesian Language: A Study Of Students At Smpn 01 Karang Gede Empat Lawang Regency

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to describe the Indonesian language attitudes of eighth-grade students at SMPN 01 Karang Gede Village, Sikap Dalam Subdistrict, Empat Lawang Regency, focusing on language loyalty, language pride, and awareness of language norms. This research employs a qualitative approach with a descriptive method. Data were collected through observation, in-depth interviews, and documentation. Data analysis followed the Miles, Huberman, and Saldaña model, consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The findings reveal that students' Indonesian language attitudes are generally in a fairly good category but not yet optimal. In terms of language loyalty, students use Indonesian in formal situations but tend to use the local language in informal interactions. Regarding language pride, students understand the importance of Indonesian as the national language, but it has not yet fully become part of their linguistic identity. In terms of language norm awareness, students still face difficulties in using Indonesian according to standard grammatical rules. Overall, students' language attitudes are situational and strongly influenced by their social environment.



Introduction

Language is a means of communication that plays an important role in human life because it serves as the primary medium for conveying ideas, feelings, experiences, and building social interactions. From an Islamic perspective, the ability to use language and the diversity of languages are among the signs of the greatness of Allah SWT, as stated in the Qur'an that the creation of the heavens and the earth, as well as the differences in human languages and skin colors, are signs for those who possess knowledge. In addition to functioning as a communication tool, language also serves as a means of forming identity, developing culture, and transmitting values across generations. In the field of education, language is a fundamental element that supports the learning process because almost all educational activities take place through the use of language. Therefore, a person's language ability and attitude toward language can

influence the quality of interaction and the success of the learning process (Mailani et al., 2022). This is in line with Islamic teachings that emphasize the importance of using good, polite, and appropriate language (*qaulan sadida*) in every aspect of life.

The Indonesian language holds a very important position in the life of the nation and the state in Indonesia. Based on statutory regulations, Indonesian functions as both the national language and the state language used in various fields of life, including education, government, science, and official communication. This position indicates that Indonesian is not only a means of communication, but also a symbol of national identity and a unifying tool for Indonesian society, which consists of diverse regional languages and cultures (Law of the Republic of Indonesia Number 24 of 2009 concerning the Flag, Language, State Symbol, and National Anthem, 2009). Preserving and maintaining this unifying language can also be interpreted as a form of gratitude for the blessing of national unity and as an implementation of the spirit of patriotism (*hubbul wathan minal iman*) within the framework of harmonious diversity.

In the context of education, Indonesian language learning is directed not only toward mastering language skills, but also toward developing positive attitudes toward the Indonesian language. Such positive attitudes are necessary so that students develop awareness in using Indonesian appropriately in accordance with linguistic rules and communication contexts. This awareness reflects attitudes of responsibility and discipline in applying (Santika & Sudiana, n.d.) language regulations. Strengthening language attitudes is an important part of the learning process because it can support the formation of students' character, enabling them to possess good communication skills and a sense of responsibility toward the use of the national language (Education, n.d.).

Language attitude is one of the important studies in sociolinguistics that discusses an individual's tendency to evaluate, accept, or use a language. Language attitude can be reflected in a person's language behavior in everyday life, both in the form of appreciation and rejection toward a language. A positive language attitude will encourage individuals to maintain the use of the language and use it in accordance with applicable norms, whereas a negative attitude can reduce the quality of the language usage (Agus, 2024)

According to (Nurulanningsih, 2022) language attitude has three main indicators, namely language loyalty, language pride, and awareness of language norms. Language loyalty refers to an individual's willingness to maintain the use of a particular language. Language pride describes a sense of belonging and appreciation toward a language as a social identity. Meanwhile, awareness of language norms indicates the level of an individual's concern for using language in accordance with applicable rules and norms.

Language loyalty, pride, and awareness of language norms are important indicators in understanding how students perceive the use of the Indonesian language within the educational environment. Students who possess positive attitudes toward the Indonesian language tend to be more confident in using Indonesian in formal situations, show concern for proper language use, and demonstrate appreciation for the national language as a symbol of national identity (Rianti, 2017)

Schools, as formal educational institutions, play an important role in shaping students' language attitudes. The school environment serves as a place where character formation and language habits develop through interactions between students and teachers as well as among students themselves. In addition, school culture, language-

use policies, and teaching strategies implemented by teachers can influence the development of students' language attitudes.

At the junior high school level (*Sekolah Menengah Pertama / SMP*), students are in the stage of early adolescence, which is characterized by the increasing influence of the social environment on the formation of identity and communication behavior. At this stage, students begin to show tendencies in choosing and using certain languages according to the social conditions around them. Therefore, studying the language attitudes of junior high school students is important in order to understand the position of the Indonesian language in their academic and social lives (Ginting, n.d. 2025) (Santrock, 2019)

SMP Negeri 01 Desa Karang Gede is one of the educational environments where language contact between Indonesian and regional languages may occur in students' daily lives. Such conditions have the potential to influence language choice and shape certain attitudes toward the use of the Indonesian language. A multilingual social environment can create variations in language use that are interesting to examine in the context of education and the development of language attitudes (Alpino, 2024).

Based on the phenomenon of language use developing within the educational environment, there are still students who use the Indonesian language inconsistently in formal situations, pay less attention to linguistic norms, and mix Indonesian with other languages in academic communication. This phenomenon indicates the importance of conducting research on language attitudes in order to obtain a clearer understanding of students' levels of language loyalty, language pride, and awareness regarding the use of the Indonesian language (Saputra & Aida, 2019).

This study was conducted to analyze the Indonesian language attitudes of Grade VIII students at SMPN 01 Desa Karang Gede, Sikap Dalam District, Empat Lawang Regency, based on the language attitude indicators proposed by Garvin and Mathiot. The results of this study are expected to contribute to the development of Indonesian language learning and serve as evaluation material in efforts to improve students' positive attitudes toward the use of the Indonesian language within the school environment, fostering not only academic intelligence but also noble character in communication (Saputra & Aida, 2019).

Method

This study employed a qualitative approach using a descriptive method. The qualitative approach was chosen because this study aimed to gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon of students' attitudes toward the Indonesian language within a natural social context, namely the school environment. A qualitative approach focuses on meanings, experiences, and social processes occurring in language use rather than on numerical data or statistical hypothesis testing. Through this approach, the researcher was able to explore how students develop attitudes toward the Indonesian language through daily interactions, both inside and outside the classroom. This approach also enables researchers to understand social reality holistically and contextually according to actual situations occurring in the field (Dewi, 2023).

The descriptive method in qualitative research was used to provide a comprehensive, systematic, and in-depth description of the phenomenon of Indonesian language attitudes among Grade VIII students. This study did not aim to test causal relationships between variables, but rather to describe the real conditions occurring in the field as they naturally exist. Through the descriptive method, the researcher was able to illustrate how students demonstrate language loyalty, language pride, and awareness of language norms in various communication situations within the school

environment. This approach is highly relevant for exploring complex and dynamic social phenomena in everyday language practices (Ahmad 2023).

The location of this study was SMP Negeri 01 Desa Karang Gede. The research site was selected purposively based on the consideration that the school possesses fairly complex sociolinguistic characteristics, where students use more than one language in daily interactions, namely Indonesian and regional languages. This bilingual condition makes the school an appropriate setting for examining students' attitudes toward the Indonesian language because it allows variations in language use in both formal and informal contexts.

In qualitative research, research subjects are referred to as informants, namely individuals who provide information related to the research focus. The informants in this study consisted of Grade VIII students as the main informants, Indonesian language teachers as supporting informants, and school authorities who understood the conditions of language use within the educational environment. The informants were selected using purposive sampling, a data source selection technique based on certain considerations such as experience, direct involvement, and knowledge of the phenomenon being studied. This technique allowed the researcher to obtain more in-depth and relevant data related to the research focus (Masrur, 2018).

In qualitative research, the number of informants is not determined rigidly as in quantitative research, but instead follows the principle of data saturation. Data are considered sufficient when the information obtained becomes repetitive and no new data relevant to the research focus emerge. This principle emphasizes the depth of information rather than the number of respondents. Thus, the researcher was able to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of students' attitudes toward the Indonesian language based on real experiences in the field (Tanzeh 2018)(Hennink & Kaiser, 2022).

Data collection techniques in this study employed three main methods, namely observation, interviews, and documentation. Observation was conducted directly in the school environment to observe students' language behavior in real situations, such as classroom interactions, peer communication, and interactions between students and teachers. This observation aimed to directly examine how the Indonesian language was used in daily communication practices without any manipulation of the situation. The observation technique enabled the researcher to understand the social context naturally and objectively (Mabruri & Aristya, 2017).

The interviews in this study were conducted through in-depth interviews with Grade VIII students and Indonesian language teachers at SMPN 01 Desa Karang Gede, Sikap Dalam District, Empat Lawang Regency. These interviews aimed to explore more deeply students' attitudes toward the Indonesian language, including aspects of language loyalty, language pride, and awareness of language norms in daily life within the school environment. Through in-depth interviews, the researcher sought to understand how students perceive the use of Indonesian, the extent to which they are proud of using it, and their habits in applying proper and correct Indonesian language rules. The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured manner so that the researcher had interview guidelines while still allowing informants the freedom to explain their language experiences openly and in depth, resulting in richer and more meaningful data (Sahiluddin et al., 2024).

In addition to interviews, observation techniques were also used in this study to directly observe the Indonesian language attitudes of Grade VIII students in real situations within the school environment. Observations were conducted during classroom learning activities, interactions among students outside the classroom, and

communication between students and teachers. The focus of the observation was directed toward how students used Indonesian, whether they used Indonesian consistently, mixed it with regional languages, or used non-standard language in formal situations. This observation was important for examining the consistency between interview data and students' actual language behavior in daily school communication (Sugiyono, 2021).

Documentation techniques were used to complement and strengthen the research data obtained from interviews and observations. The documentation in this study included the profile of SMPN 01 Desa Karang Gede, data on the number of Grade VIII students, photographs of Indonesian language learning activities, and other archives related to language use within the school environment. Documentation data were used to support the analysis of students' language attitudes, particularly in understanding the school environment context influencing the use of Indonesian. In addition, documentation also played an important role in the data triangulation process to enhance the validity and credibility of the research findings (Pluralisme et al., 2015).

The primary instrument in this qualitative research was the researcher himself. This is because the researcher was directly involved in the entire research process, starting from data collection, observation, interviews, to data analysis. In this study, the researcher had to understand the sociolinguistic conditions at SMPN 01 Desa Karang Gede and be capable of obtaining in-depth information regarding the Indonesian language attitudes of Grade VIII students. To ensure that the data collection process was more focused, the researcher used interview and observation guidelines prepared based on indicators of Indonesian language attitudes, namely language loyalty, language pride, and awareness of language norms (Alhamid 2019).

Data analysis in this study used the model proposed by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana, which consists of three main stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Data reduction was carried out by selecting and focusing on data directly related to the Indonesian language attitudes of Grade VIII students at SMPN 01 Desa Karang Gede. Irrelevant data, such as conversations unrelated to the use of Indonesian, were excluded so that the analysis remained focused on the research topic, namely students' language attitudes. The reduction process was carried out continuously from the beginning of data collection until the completion of the study (Pandeglang et al., 2026).

The final stage was conclusion drawing and data verification. At this stage, the researcher derived meaning from all analyzed data concerning the Indonesian language attitudes of Grade VIII students at SMPN 01 Desa Karang Gede, Sikap Dalam District, Empat Lawang Regency. Conclusions were not drawn instantly but were continuously verified throughout the research process to ensure consistency between interview, observation, and documentation data. This verification was important to ensure that the research findings truly reflected the actual conditions in the field regarding students' language attitudes (Miles et al., 2020).

Results and Discussion

Based on the research conducted at SMPN 01 Desa Karang Gede, Sikap Dalam District, Empat Lawang Regency, using observation, interviews, and documentation techniques, it was found that the Indonesian language attitudes of Grade VIII students can be viewed from three main aspects, namely language loyalty, language pride, and awareness of language norms. In general, students' language attitudes are categorized as fairly good; however, they are still inconsistent in various communication situations, especially outside formal learning activities.

The findings indicate that students' use of the Indonesian language is still highly influenced by situational context. In formal situations such as classroom learning, students tend to use Indonesian more appropriately, whereas in informal situations, the use of regional languages and mixed language forms is more dominant. This shows that students' language attitudes are not yet fully stable and are still influenced by their daily social environment.

Language Loyalty

The results of the study show that students' loyalty toward the Indonesian language is categorized as fairly good, but not yet optimal. In the classroom learning process, students still attempt to use Indonesian when interacting with teachers, such as when answering questions, participating in discussions, and expressing opinions. In these formal situations, the use of Indonesian occurs because it is a requirement of the school learning process, although code-mixing with regional languages is still found.

However, in situations outside the classroom, students more frequently use regional languages as their main means of communication with peers. Indonesian is rarely used consistently in informal situations because students feel that regional languages are easier, more familiar, and more comfortable to use in daily conversations.

The interview results also show that some students consider regional languages to be faster to understand and more expressive in communication. This indicates that the influence of the family environment and social interaction is very strong in shaping students' language habits, resulting in regional languages still dominating their social interactions. Thus, students' language loyalty toward Indonesian is still situational in nature, meaning it appears only in formal contexts such as classroom learning but decreases in non-formal situations. This is in line with Garvin and Mathiot's view that language loyalty is demonstrated through consistent language use across various communication contexts (Irwan, 2023) (Garvin & Mathiot, 1968).

Language Pride

In the aspect of language pride, Grade VIII students show a positive attitude in terms of knowledge, but this has not been fully reflected in their daily behavior. The students understand that Indonesian is the national language and is used in education as well as official communication. However, in practice, they still frequently mix Indonesian with regional languages or slang. The interview results indicate that some students feel more confident when using mixed language rather than using standard Indonesian in its full form. This shows that pride in the Indonesian language has not yet fully become part of the students' personal identity.

According to (Suharti, 2021.) language pride is a positive attitude reflected in a sense of ownership and appreciation toward the national language. In this study, students' language pride is still at the cognitive level and has not yet fully developed into consistent language behavior.

Awareness of Language Norms

The results of the study show that students' awareness of Indonesian language norms is categorized as moderate to low. In classroom learning activities, many language errors were still found, both in spoken and written forms. These errors include incorrect sentence structures, inappropriate word choices, and the use of non-standard language when expressing opinions or answering questions. This indicates that students' understanding of Indonesian language rules exists, but has not been consistently applied in daily language practice. In formal situations, such as during classroom learning, students are actually aware that the use of Indonesian should follow correct linguistic rules and conventions. However, in practice, students tend to prioritize communication fluency over linguistic accuracy. As a result, in classroom interactions and when completing

assignments, code-mixing between Indonesian and regional languages still frequently occurs, along with the use of non-standard forms that have become habitual in their daily communication.

In addition, observation results show that some students are not accustomed to correcting their own language use. When communicating, they focus more on delivering messages so that they are easily understood by their interlocutors, without paying much attention to the correct structure and rules of Indonesian grammar. This condition indicates that awareness of language norms has not yet become a strong habit among students, especially in informal situations within the school environment. Interview results also reveal that some students consider standard Indonesian to sound too rigid and uncomfortable for everyday conversation. They prefer using more relaxed and mixed language forms to make communication feel more familiar with their peers. This shows that environmental and social interaction factors greatly influence students' low awareness of proper Indonesian language use according to linguistic norms.

This low level of awareness indicates that the habituation of correct and proper Indonesian language use still needs to be improved, both through classroom instruction and through language culture within the school environment. Teachers play an important role in providing examples of proper language use and in encouraging students to pay more attention to language structure in every communication activity. This is in line with recent research stating that consistent habituation of standard language use in educational environments can improve students' linguistic awareness and enhance their language skills quality (Ameliyah, 2025).

Conclusion

Based on the results of the research on Indonesian language attitudes of Grade VIII students at SMPN 01 Desa Karang Gede, Sikap Dalam District, Empat Lawang Regency, it can be concluded that, in general, students' Indonesian language attitudes are categorized as fairly good, but not yet optimal. This is evident from the three main aspects of language attitude—language loyalty, language pride, and awareness of language norms—which have not developed in a balanced way across different communication situations.

In terms of language loyalty, students are able to use Indonesian in formal situations such as classroom learning; however, they are not yet consistent in informal situations, as they tend to predominantly use regional languages. In terms of language pride, students already understand the importance of Indonesian as the national language, but have not fully internalized it as part of their linguistic identity in daily life. Meanwhile, in terms of awareness of language norms, students still experience difficulties in using Indonesian in accordance with proper linguistic rules, both in spoken and written forms.

Thus, it can be concluded that students' Indonesian language attitudes are still situational in nature, meaning they depend on the context of language use. Therefore, more intensive reinforcement is needed so that the use of Indonesian can become a consistent habit in various communication situations.

Recommendations

Based on the results of this study, several suggestions can be made. Indonesian language teachers are expected to place greater emphasis on the habituation of using good and correct Indonesian in every learning activity. Schools should create an Indonesian language-friendly environment, for example by implementing programs such as an "Indonesian Language Day." Students also need to be given motivation to strengthen their sense of pride in the Indonesian language as a national identity. In addition, parents at home are expected to support the habit of using Indonesian in daily communication. Through collaboration between schools, teachers, students, and the family environment, it is hoped that students' Indonesian language attitudes can improve and become more

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