

## LANGUAGE ATTITUDE AND LANGUAGE CHOICE IN BILINGUAL ACADEMIC LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

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### ABSTRACT

*The objectives of this research were to observe the language attitude and factors determining language choice of English Department students of Bina Nusantara University. The observation carried out by exploring the motivation, language choice, and language practice of the English Department students. The data were collected through a questionnaire, which was designed to capture the students' motivation in studying English, language choice, and practice. The result of this research shows that the English department students hold the positive attitude toward English, which are shown through the statement of the majority of the students who argue that English is an international language and offers more career opportunities. The two main factors determining the use of English are the role of the lectures and the English language exposure in the academic environment. This result is expected to provide a context to design an effective English learning process to encourage students in practicing the language.*

**Keywords:** language attitude, language choice, English as Foreign Language, learning environment

### INTRODUCTION

Pennycook (2010) has explained that English is too often assumed to be a language that holds out the promise of social and economic development to all who learn it, equal opportunity, and the world needs in order to communicate. The assumption is considered to be one of the motivations why people across the globe to learn English. English has become a world language, which is utilized in various aspects of international relations, tourism, global media, science, technology, and education. Aldosari (2010) has claimed that English is learned by over 150 million children in primary or secondary schools, as a foreign language, as a compulsory or an optional language in most countries. Thus, the use of English across context has always been an appealing topic to observe.

This research focuses on the attitude and language choice in the bilingual academic learning environment in Indonesian universities. Indonesia is considered as a proper object to conduct an observation of English using across context because it provides a clear illustration of a non-English-speaking country, where English has become more popular in recent years. Lauder (1998) has noted that based on its function for educational purposes, English is positioned in third place after Indonesian as the main language and the regional vernaculars. Many people take an English course

and join or enroll in the English department to learn English. The problem faced by many bilingual schools and English course in Indonesia is the condition where students do not use English outside or inside the classroom. For that reason, observation of students' language attitude and choice in the bilingual academic environment is important to provide a context in designing an effective learning process to encourage students in practicing English.

Indonesia is a country, which has more than 500 regional languages spoken all over the country. Indonesia is known for its highly multicultural and multilingual society, which Indonesian is the national language. Sneddon (2003) has assumed that the existence of English in Indonesia is seen as a representation of prestigious cultures. The assumption is derived from the history of the existence of the language that was taught in secondary school during the Dutch colonization era. Thus, only rich and educated Indonesian people who got access to learn English.

From this perspective, it is important to examine the relationship between the language attitudes of students and how it affects their language inside and outside the classroom. As mentioned by Padwick (2010), the nature of learning does not only depend on intellectual ability but also on the learners' attitude toward the language. Attitude, in this case, refers to what Gardner (1985) defines as a person's values and beliefs, which encourage or discourage

the language choice they made.

According to Jaspal (2009), language does not only serve the role as an instrument of communication but it also “constitutes an important marker of social identity at various levels of human interdependence, e.g., subcultural or national”. Therefore the attitudes and values of users or non-users will influence language use and language choice. Crawford, Pablo, and Lengeling (2016) elaborates the individual attitudes towards a language will impact, for example, on the value places on the language, invariably, and how much of it may be used by first language speakers or learned by second language speakers. In other words, the status of the language in a particular society also influences the attitudes of speakers as well as non-speakers. It shows that language attitudes provide an explanation to determine the factor influencing language choice. Language choice is a reflection of speakers’ attitude toward a language. Positive language attitude will promote encouragement to the language use and the other way around.

The objective of this research is to explore factors, which determine language choice of English Department students at Bina Nusantara University inside and outside the classroom. The factors will be observed by looking at their language attitude and motivation in learning their second language. English Department students at Bina Nusantara University are chosen to be an object of the research because they are considered as a sample of the bilingual community. The majority of the students speak Indonesian in their daily language and English as the foreign language. The data will be collected through questionnaires where 100 students will be asked related to language attitude and language choice. The questionnaire is designed to expose the students’ language attitude, which affects their language use and motivation to learn the language. The language attitude performed through the questionnaires by the students will reflect the factors that determine their language choice inside and outside the classroom.

## METHODS

The data of this research will be collected through the questionnaire. The questionnaires are distributed to 100 English Department students of Bina Nusantara University. The students are asked to fill specific questions related to their language practice and language attitude. The questions are structured to see whether the learning environment and their motivation of learning English affect their language practice, in this case the use of English. Asking the question about people’s opinion toward certain language variation and practice through questionnaire is an effective method to observe language attitude and ideology besides interviewing (Choi, 2003). This method is considered as a direct method, which includes “forms of overt questioning about the meanings of linguistic varieties” (Coupland, 2007). Thus, by using this method, researchers give the respondents form, which contains questions related to their language choice, practice, and ask the respondents to give their opinion about it.

English Department students of Bina Nusantara University is selected as the sample to observe language choice and attitude based on their bilingual learning environment setting. The university situated in Jakarta where most of the population speak Indonesian only, local language in family setting for some immigrant, and English occasionally. English is only used for specific purpose

(international school, international meeting, and English major classes). English Department students of Bina Nusantara is seen as one social network which has similar language practice since they belong in the similar academic learning environment.

The opinion given by the students further is analyzed to see whether the positive or negative attitude they reveal toward the use of English language affect their choice in academic learning environment. The proportion of language choice stated in the questionnaire by the students is the indicator of the attitude. The factors determining language choice is observed through the language practiced by everyone involved in the academic learning environment stated by the students. The correlation between these two indicators is used to determine factors determining language choice.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

The first part of the questionnaire focuses on the motivation of the students in choosing English Department as their major in the university. This question is intended to capture the attitude of the student toward the English language. The motivation for learning the language indicates whether the attitude is positive or negative.

Table 1 shows that the number one reason is the assumption that English is considered as the international language. Therefore 30% of the students consider that learning English is important to be part of an internationalized and globalized world. Another prominent finding in Table 1 is a positive attitude toward the English language, which shows through 20 students who study English for the career opportunity reason. The students assume that studying English is a guarantee to get a good job once they graduate.

The second part of the questionnaire focuses on the language chosen by the students for different purposes. The findings are presented in Table 2.

Table 1 Why Do You Learn English?

No	Reasons	N
1.	International Language	30
2.	Personal Interest	22
3.	Career Opportunity	20
4.	Reading Sources	10
5.	Improving English Skill	8
6.	Communicative Purpose	4
7.	Early Background	4
8.	Irrelevant Answer	2

Table 2 Language Choice of English Department Students

Language Choice	Reading	Speaking	Writing
English	66	44	62
Indonesia	30	50	32
Both	2	6	4
No Answer	2	0	2

The result in Table 2 compares the language choice used by students for different purposes; reading, speaking,

and writing. The numbers in Table 2 indicate the percentage of 100 students as the participants. For speaking purpose, the majority of the students (66) prefer to use English instead of Indonesian or other languages. Similarly, for writing, 62 of the 100 students prefer English. The distinctive finding shows in the language choice of speaking, 50 of the students think that they feel more comfortable to speak in Indonesian compared to English and other languages.

Table 3 Language Choice for Classroom Delivery and the Reasons

Language Choice	N	Reasons
English	84	Seek Improvement (35) Mandatory Use (24) Language Exposure (20) Reason not provided (4) Out of Comfort (1)
Indonesia	8	Out of Comfort (4)
Both	8	Mandatory Use (1) Situational Use (1) Reason not provided (2)

Despite the fact that all classroom delivery must be in English, the finding in Table 3 shows that if the students can choose the language delivery, there are 8 students prefer mixed Indonesian and English for classroom delivery and 8 of the students only prefer Indonesian as language delivery. Meanwhile, the 84 of the students still prefer English as the classroom delivery. Most of the reasons stated by the students are related to seek improvement, mandatory use, and language exposure. The data shows that English is the most favored language chosen by the students as the language of classroom delivery.

The third part of the questionnaire focuses on the frequency of language that is used by the lecturers that are observed by the students. The findings are divided into three main concerns; the first is the observation of languages used by the lecturers, second is the use of English based on the participant, and the third is the use of English based on the setting. It can be seen in Table 4.

Table 4 Language Used By Lecturers

Language used by lecturers	N
English	86
Indonesia	10
Indonesia - English	4

Table 4 shows the result of the language used by the lecturers in class delivery based on the students' observation. The data shows that 86 of the students state that their lecturers always use English in the class for the delivery. There are still 10 of the students who think that the lecturers mostly use Indonesian. The other two think that the lecturers use mixed English-Indonesian as classroom delivery.

Table 5 shows that 48 of the students only use English when they talk to the lecturers. Only 16 of them that are used English to talk to everyone. Table 5 also implies that the strongest English exposure to the students come from the lecturers and friends.

Table 5 Language Use Based On Participants

Participants	N
Lecturers	48
Friends	24
Everyone	16
Parents	6
Friends and Family	2
Online Pals	2

Table 6 Language Use Based On Settings

Setting	N
In class only	32
At campus (inside and outside classroom)	22
Everywhere	18
At home	16
Internet forum/ online pals	8
Church	2
Only when it is needed	2

The data in Table 6 indicates that there are 54 students only use English in the class and at the campus. Even though, there are 18 of students get English exposure everywhere.

The finding shows that there are three positive attitudes shown by the students toward English. The majority of the students study English because of the three main reasons; (1) English as an international language; (2) personal interest; and (3) career opportunities. The positive attitudes become motivations for the students to learn English.

As it is observed by Rahimi, Riazi, and Saif (2008), positive language attitudes will encourage learners to have a positive orientation towards the second language. In the process of second language learning and foreign language learning, positive attitude and high motivation are one of the facilities, which should be acknowledged by the students and lecturers.

Based on that perspective, the positive attitudes that are shown by English Department students of Bina Nusantara University are an excellent foreground in designing and choosing the kind of learning method or exposure for the students. The three reasons mentioned by the majority of students are considered as the starting point to create an environment where the students get the language exposure.

The assumptions of English as an international language and career opportunities are clearly related with the idea of English as a commodity in the globalized world. By possessing the commodity, in this case, English as the economic benefit will be gained. The benefit the English offers have motivated the students to learn the language. This means that the value of language is measured based on the way it serves the economic demand from society. The students assume that mastering English will give them the opportunity to get a good job and access to the global community. As it is described by Heller (2010), English has increasingly become the potential 'world' languages. This shapes the language choice of the people in favor of economically powerful languages and all the lifestyle associated with them. Therefore, through the ideology that English is a global language, which brings economic

benefit, the language choice of the students is observed in relation to their language ideology.

Block (2010) has framed that the object of language in the globalized context related to its function as the international language but it switches from grammatical consideration to the communicative purpose. The competence developed in learners is expanded from the traditional language learning. The concern is focused more on the communicative purpose and not limited on the lexical, syntactical, morphological, and phonological level. Therefore to achieve successful language learning, language exposure around the learning environment must be examined.

Based on the context of language attitude revealed in the part of the questionnaire, the frequency, language choice, and language used by the students are discussed further to find out whether their attitude is coherence with the language use pattern and the exposure of the environment to use English. Based on the observation of the language choice from the students, the majority of the students prefer to use English for writing and reading. On the other hand, the majority of them prefer Indonesian for speaking. This finding leads into an interesting discussion when the researchers put it on the context of English as an international language concept framed by Block (2010). The main concern in language teaching in the global context is to shift the main concern for the communicative purpose. The fact that the students prefer to use Indonesian in term of speaking proves that the students are still lack of oral communication skill in English.

The majority of the students choose English as the language delivery in the classroom. The three major reasons are to seek improvement, mandatory, and language exposure. The three reasons indicate the students realize that the frequent use of English will improve their English and academic environment, such as classroom as the best place to get the exposure.

Despite their choice of English as language delivery, they are still lacking speaking skill. Therefore, the factors affecting the lack of communicative skill are observed through the following part of the questionnaire where the students are asked about the frequency of English used based on the setting and the participants. The finding indicates several important points related to factors affecting the language choice by students. Based on the setting, English is frequently chosen in the academic environment. 32 of the students use English in the class, and 22 of the students use English inside and outside of class in the campus. Based on the participants, English is used by the students most of the time when they talk to the lecturers (48) and their friends (24). 86 of the students mention that their lecturers always use English in the class; thus they have a chance to speak English when they are in the classroom.

Different social contexts influence the outcomes of researches related to attitudes towards language learning. The effects of attitude might be much stronger in a context where there is much more opportunity for contact between learners and target language speakers than in a foreign language context, where learners are not in close contact with the target cultures and beliefs. From the discussion, in the Indonesian context, the two main factors of English used by English Department students are the role of the lecturer and the academic environment. These two factors are forming the students' contact with the target language, in this case English. Thus, the language attitude and language

choice of the students are heavily depending on the language used by the lecturers and the academic environments.

The finding and the discussion point out that the role of the lecturers is very crucial in determining the language choice of the students. The rule that is made in the English Department, which requires all of the lecturers and the students use English in class has successfully regulated the frequent use of English. There are still small numbers of the students (4) who claim that most of the lecturers still use mix Indonesian-English and the other ten claim that most of the lecturers even use Indonesian in-class delivery. The reason for the mix is the explanatory concept part of the lecture. The students who claim their lecturers still use mix or Indonesian mention that they switch their language from English to Indonesian or mix it with Indonesian to explain the core concept of the topic within the subject.

The students explain that some lecturers unconsciously switch the language to Indonesian when they try to explain things that are considered complicated to be explained in English. This habit forms an attitude that Indonesian is considered a simpler language. It affects the language choice of the students where they prefer to use Indonesian for the communicative purpose. In another research, Chalak and Kassaian (2010) figure out that the attitude is highly affected on the success of language acquisition. Thus, the attitude implied from lecturers' language choice has a great impact on the process of language learning, especially on the language choice of the students. To achieve successful language learning, the lecturers must have more awareness of their language choice. The use of the language other than English must be avoided in the classroom to provide an example to the students that in term of oral communication.

Another factor affecting the language choice of the students is the setting of English use. The finding underlines the fact that students only use English in the academic setting. The majority of the students mention that the only exposure they get to speak English is in the university environment. 32% of the students only use English in the class, and 22% use English inside and outside the classroom. Only 18% of the students use English everywhere. This shows another reason why students do not choose English when they are speaking.

This is an important finding for designing language learning strategy. As stated by Rahimi, Riazi, and Saif (2008), in many cases, the pattern of language exposure in the EFL context affects the degree and nature of the proficiency level also the motivation of the learner. Further, the learning of new language varieties and its social association in school are highly dependent on lecturer attitudes toward language diversity. Therefore, the problem faced by the students, related to the lack of language exposure, is the same problem with the most English students in multilingual society, where English is only considered as the foreign language.

In Indonesia context, English is not even considered as the second language. The first language of most students in the English department of Bina Nusantara University is Indonesian and their second language is their local language. Therefore, there is almost no exposure to English use outside the academic environment. The data shows 16 of them use English at home and none of them use English in public places. It shows that the academic environment plays the most important role in creating English exposure for the students to improve their skill in communicating orally in English.

## CONCLUSIONS

Based on the research questions, there are two significant findings previously discussed in the previous chapter. The two research questions being observed are the attitude of English Department students of Bina Nusantara University hold toward the use of the English language and the factors determining the language choice of English Department students. The finding emphasizes two important points; (1) the students hold the positive attitude toward English, and (2) the factors affecting the students' language choice are the role of the lecturers and language exposure in the academic environment.

The positive attitude is shown through the statement of the majority of the students who argue that English is an international language and they also state that the language offers more career opportunities. The factors affecting the language choice are the role of the lecturers and language exposure in the academic environment.

The students prefer to use English for writing, reading, and listening to classroom delivery from the lecturers but most of them still prefer to use Indonesian for speaking out of comfort. Based on the participant and setting observation, English is mostly used to talk to lecturers and in academic environments. Therefore, these two factors determine the language exposure of English speaking to English Department students at Bina Nusantara University.

This research is limited to situational and case-based language choice in academic context. The findings of this research suggest that further research related to curriculum design and English exposure to the English Department students must be carried out. The problem raised through the discussion is the lack of exposure for the students to use English outside the academic environment. A curriculum and mandatory rule related to English language use, as language delivery must be designed based on the research finding.

Another problem pointed out from the finding is the fact that student prefers to use Indonesian for speaking. It shows that language exposure related to oral communication still needs improvement. Based on the motivation, the majority of the students argue that they learn English because English is assumed as the international language, which promises them more career options. This language ideology can be used as a foundation to develop more communicative oriented language learning in the English Department.

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