

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

People in society create many interactions through communication in daily life. To communicate each other the people need language as tools for communication. Through the language, there are interactions among people to exchange the information, thoughts, and feelings. The activities of exchanging information, thoughts and feelings in other word are called by conversation.

Conversation is an activity of asking and answering between two or more people with a particular language to talk about a certain topic. Conversation according to Cambridge Advanced Learner's Dictionary is a talk between two or more people in which thoughts, feelings, and ideas are expressed, questions were asked and answered, or news and information was exchanged.

In the process of exchanging information, the attitudes often appear in responding the information which is acquired from other people. In line with this phenomenon, English conversation is one of the subjects taught in Senior High School as an extracurricular subject. In the process of teaching and learning of English conversation, the students often realized their attitudes in several ways, some students did not participate in the classroom activities, some also did not want to speak, some others were not confident to speak, but some of them were serious in learning, and some others were confident in speaking English. For example:

Teacher: “good afternoon students, how are you today?”

Students: “*no what what, sir gak usah pake bahasa Inggris kenapa? Kami kan orang Indonesia.*”

It was seen that some students gave the negative attitudes by saying that “please do not speak English sir, do you?” It meant that they did not like to use English during the English conversation learning. These phenomena occurred in Senior High School (SMA) Al-Hidayah Medan at the twelfth grade students, many students said that learning English was not important but the rest said that English was important.

The other responses from some students which showed the attitudes in learning English conversation can be seen as follows:

Teacher: “Ok students, now we are going to study about self introduction, are you ready?”

Students: (no answer, then lying their heads on the table and going to sleep in the class)

This phenomenon described the attitudes of students toward English conversation class, it showed that some students also had the negative attitudes which expressed directly with their behavior.

However, some students had the positive attitudes toward English conversation. It was seen from their responses as follows:

Teacher: “Ok, if you don’t understand all, you can mix with bahasa Indonesia”.

Students: “Sir, why don’t we use full English again, because I like it.”

This expression was verbally shown by the students because of their expectations to use full of English language in the English conversation class and it also showed their positive attitudes towards English conversation class.

Meanwhile it was expected that students should be able to speak English well as the learning objective of English subject particularly in English conversation class. So that was why, English conversation was the application of the speaking skill in teaching English. Kara (2009) stated that positive attitudes lead to the exhibition of positive behaviors toward courses of study, with participants absorbing themselves in courses and striving to learn more. Holmes (2001) stated that positive attitudes support efforts to use the language in variety of domains. Furthermore, Gravin and Mathiot (1986) stated the characteristics of language attitude consisted of language loyalty, language pride and awareness of language norms. But, the reality showed that students were not competent yet in English speaking, moreover they did not have the curiosity to learn and speak. Moreover, the students tended to learn English grammar such as writing and reading rather than speaking skills and listening skills.

Factually, the problems of the students which were found in SMA Al-Hidayah Medan based on the observation namely; students were worried and inhibited about saying things in a foreign language in the classroom because of their fear of criticism or simply being shy of the attention that their speech attracts; students have no motive to express themselves, i.e., the guilty feeling that they should be speaking; low or uneven participation, this meant that the tendency of some students to dominate, while others spoke very little or not at all; students tended to share mother tongue because it felt unnatural to speak to one another in a target language and because they felt less exposed if they were speaking their mother tongue.

However, Ur (1996:121) summarized the difficulties problems faced by students into the following points: 1) Learning language meant communicate orally in different situations, most of students were afraid of to be criticized in front of their colleges for this reason they prefer keeping silence rather than expressing themselves. 2) Students' anxiety and shyness block the process of their ability to participate in conversation. 3) The lack of English environment, the large-class size and the lack of practicing language, all were the fundamental problems which should be fixed.

Therefore, classroom would present the only place where students have opportunities to listen and speak English. For this, teachers should choose topics that help to build positive students' attitudes, especially in the first few class in English conversation class. Students would feel confident and performed successfully in the class.

Here are the previous studies which support and against the present study. Eshghinejad (2016) found a positive attitude of EFL students toward English learning in three aspects of behavioral, cognitive, and emotional. In addition, Zeinivand (2015) revealed that EFL learners have very high attitude towards learning English and relationship between attitude and speaking proficiency learners was positive. Furthermore, Toomnan (2015) found that students with positive attitude towards speaking English reported significantly greater overall strategy use than those students with negative attitude. Then, Burgos (2015) asserted that students appreciate English as a global language, but they were not committed to learning it at school. It was also relevant with Ahmed (2015) that

stated that the attitude towards English language learning and using the language in various domains of usage was extremely positive. Furthermore, Abdulmohsen (2014) found that the majority of students feel that they have benefited from the conversation class in different domains; yet, many required a clearer outline of the course. In line with it, Karahan (2007) found that students of Turkish have mildly positive attitudes especially female students have higher rates by recognizing the importance of the English.

The other researcher Hadidi (2015) found that attitude was deployed in the expected order of appreciation, judgment, affect, and also that attitude was stylistically indicative of and worked in line with character and context within the novel in question.

So far, it was stated that most of the students have the positive attitudes towards English language in this case English conversations. It was seen from the attitudes of the students like appreciation, feel the benefit of and the ways of students in learning it.

In contrast, Ahmad (2014) found that the Students of Islamic Education System have the negative attitudes and low motivation toward learning the English language. It was also similar with Abidin (2012) which found that the EFL students showed negative attitudes towards learning English.

Based on some explanation above, it was stated that the study about attitudes were the current issues which were still controversial regarding to the recent research findings from several countries and studies. It meant that the attitudes study was acceptable to research further.

1.2. Focus of the Research

The focus of this research was language attitudes in conversation class. Attitude has been studied from various perspectives with reference to a number of languages in a variety of settings such as attitude towards mother tongue; attitude towards a second or foreign language; attitude towards national language; attitude towards varieties of languages; attitude towards language in education policy; relationship between attitudes and motivation; the relationship between attitudes and learning strategies; the relationship between attitudes and level of achievement and so on.

The preliminary data made the interesting point to conduct the research focused on to the students' attitudes toward the English conversation class in SMA Al-Hidayah Medan. It was interested also to find out why some students in this school rejected English conversation class but the others need it so much while they understood the important of English itself for their future. This research also focused on to the factors that influence the students' attitude toward English conversation class.

1.3. The Scope of Research

This research limits the scope of topic discussion, the language attitudes toward the English conversation. Language attitudes consisted of sentences, clauses, phrases and words. The behavior of students consisted of actions, reactions, or respond of the students during the English conversation class teaching and learning process. The English conversation topics consisted of greetings, introducing self, introducing others, talking about daily activities,

talking about request, talking about commands, talking about prohibition, and talking about offering.

1.4. Research Problems

In line with the background above, the research problems of this research are as follows:

1. What are the types of attitudes of the Senior High School students toward English conversation class?
2. How are the attitudes of Senior High School students realized toward English conversation class?
3. Why are the attitudes of Senior High School students realized toward English conversation class in the ways they are?

1.5. The Objectives of the Research

In line with the research problems above, the objectives of this research are as follows:

1. To describe the types of attitudes of the Senior High School students toward English conversation class.
2. To elaborate the realization of the attitudes of Senior High School students toward English conversation class.
3. To explain the reasons of the Senior High School students realize their attitudes toward English conversation class in the ways they are.

1.6. The Significances of the Research

It was expected that findings of this research were relevant and useful theoretically and practically. Theoretically, findings of this study were expected to enrich horizons the theories of language attitudes. In addition, the findings can be as references for further studies. Practically, the findings were expected to be useful for all of the social community included children, parents, schools' society, government, the figures of society, figures of culture because language was so generally indeed the scope of research influence so many aspect. This research was expected useful in understanding the importance of the language in social community. The attitudes of someone to a language affected the development of a language that can cause a language became shift or loss. So the researcher sure this research was completely should be done.