

## Language attitude of Singkil students in the context of bilingualism: A study of sociolinguistics

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**Abstract** - This paper attempts to look at Singkil student's attitudes towards their language (Singkil language) and their attitudes towards Indonesian language as the national language of Indonesia country. Singkil language is an Austronesian language spoken by aboriginal speakers living dominantly in five districts, namely Kuta Baharu, Simpang Kanan, Suro, Gunung Meriah, and Singkil are administratively under the Singkil regency of Aceh province, Indonesia. The method used in this research is descriptive. Data were obtained through a quantitatively analyzed questionnaire for each characteristic feature calculated the average number of values (mean) language attitudes, using a Likert technique. The language attitude of respondents here towards Singkil language is very positive. It can be seen from the 12 questions given are mostly in positive attitude from 2,7 – 4,8. Otherwise, question 8 and 9 are negative from 2 – 2, 5. Therefore, the Singkil students have a positive attitude toward the use of their language. On the other hand, the language attitude of Singkil students towards Indonesian language from 12 questions given are mostly in positive attitude from 2,8 – 4,6. Otherwise, question 5, 12, and 12 are negative from 2 – 2, 3. Therefore, the Singkil students have a positive attitude toward the use of Indonesian language. Thus, this study hopefully may reveal how the people of Singkil in several areas extensively use Indonesian language in their daily communication, and the government of Aceh Province should maintain the sustainability of language in Aceh Province especially Singkil language by showing the uniqueness and richness of linguistics diversity in the region.

**Keywords:** bilingualism, Indonesian language, language attitude, Singkil language

## 1. Introduction

Singkil, an Austronesian language spoken by the aboriginal speakers living dominantly in five districts, namely Kuta Baharu, Simpang Kanan, Suro, Gunung Meriah, and Singkil, are administratively under the Singkil regency of Aceh province, Indonesia. According to Ethnologue, Singkil is a dialect of Batak Alas-Kluet (btz).

According to folklore, it is originated from the word "shekels," which means "want". The history of the Singkil region started from the town of Singkil, which is a central area of the kingdom. According to Tgk. Lukman Sinar, the name Singkil was already noted in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. A famous Portuguese author, Tom Pires who lived in Malacca (1512 -1515 C), wrote about the West Coast of Sumatra. He also wrote about some kingdoms which existed in those areas, namely; "Andalar" (*Andalas = MinangKabau*), "Tiquo" (*Tiku*) and *Pariaman*, both kingdoms were located in West Sumatra, "Barras Minhac" (*Nias, North Sumatra*). And then, he eluded the kingdom of "Chinqueele" or "Quinchell" (meaning *Singkil*). He also claimed that the kingdom of Singkil shares a border with the kingdom of Barus *Mancopaor Daya* (Meulaboh, North Aceh). The areas of Singkil kingdom produced rosin wood, silk, pepper, a little gold, and had *Lancara* (boat speed) because small rivers surrounded this kingdom. The Singkil trade route spread along was with the kingdom of *Pasai* (Pase), the kingdom of *Barus*, the kingdom of *Tiku* and the kingdom of *Pariaman* (West Sumatra).

Further, the name "Sinckel" has also been found in the map of Petrus Plancius in 1592 AD (in the "*Monumenta cartho graphico*" Volume II). Other written evidence of the name of Singkil was immortalized at the end of a tremendous famous 'ulama of Aceh, Syekh Abdur Rauf, as Singkili who served as Qadi Malikul Ratu Adil Safiatuddin government era and the reign of three queens after that (1657 - 1699 AD).

Singkil speakers are spread over 11 districts, namely Danau Paris, GunungMeriah, Kota Baharu, Kuala Baru, Pulau Banyak Barat, Pulau Banyak, Simpang Kanan, Singkil, Singkil Utara, Singkohor and Suro. The highest number of speakers are domiciled in the district of Gunung Meriah (30.869), Simpang Kanan (12.495), Suro (8829), Kota Baharu (6.332) and Singkil (5.500). From this description, the distribution of Singkil speakers in different areas of Singkil regency is presented demographically in table 1.1 according to Central Bureau of statistics of Singkil regency (2015).

Table 1 The Demographic Distribution of Singkil Speakers in Singkil Regency

Num.	Sub-Districts	Number of Speakers
1	Danau Paris	723
2	GunungMeriah	30.869
3	Kota Baharu	6.332
4	Kuala Baru	229
5	Pulau Banyak Barat	20
6	Pulau Banyak	50
7	SimpangKanan	12.495
8	Singkil	5.500
9	Singkil Utara	723
10	Singkohor	2.500
11	Suro	8.829
	Total	68.270

Singkil language is, however, greatly influenced by *Indonesian language*. Along with grammar, there are many lexical items from the national language "*Indonesian language*," which Singkil uses. These borrowed words from *Indonesian language* have enriched the vocabulary of local languages. The reasons for *Indonesian language*'s words present in Singkil

are interaction and exchange among Singkil people and the active role of the Indonesian government in promoting *Indonesian language* as the language of unity and identity for all Indonesian people.

It can be seen that Singkil people, both in *kota* and *desa*, come into contact with their neighbors in places such as *meunasah* ‘a small praying building.’ As Muslims, almost all Singkil people pray five times a day at *meunasah* or mosque. Every Friday afternoon, big crowds gather in every mosque, not in *meunasah* because the Muslims pray *Jum’ah*, an obligatory prayer for men in the congregation. Singkil people also gather in the market, where the traditional shops and stores are still common. The interaction that takes place here, between buyers and sellers, maintains and strengthens community ties. People in villages mostly speak the Singkil language, but some people will use Indonesian language if they think the background of the interlocutor is not Singkil. Language choice between Singkil language and *Indonesian language* also occurs in government offices, institutions, and schools. As a mother tongue, Singkil Language (Kade-kade Language) is used by the community of Singkil in informal environments both in family and society. It cannot be avoided that the language element of Singkil Language then brought in the use of the Indonesian Language in a formal situation such as in the daily communication, learning process in schools and official governments.

In line with the description above, Thomasson (2001. P.1) also declares, “Language contact is the use of more than one language in the same place at the same time. Language contact in this substantive sense does not require fluent bilingualism or multilingualism, but some communication between speakers of different languages necessary.” People rarely make a conscious decision to become bilingual; it happens because their interaction with the world around them requires the use of two languages. Bilingualism is not a problem but an asset; it is merely a fact of life that should be dealt with in the as unbiased way as possible. As Grosjean (1982) points out, 6 several forms of bilingualism was occurred as the result of language groups which isolate other existed language group so the languages in society is crammed with instances of language exchange.

In general terms, the study of language attitudes has been based on two theoretical approaches: the *behaviorist* approach and the *mentalist* approach. Fasold (1984) agrees that people’s responses to social situations may show the view of behaviorist outlooks. Further, he comments that this viewpoint makes research more comfortable to undertake since it requires no self-reports or indirect inferences. Merely observing, tabulating, and analyzing obvious behavior are required necessarily in this kind of research. However, the writers concur with Agheyisi and Fishman (1970), who warned earlier that attitudes of this sort would not be quite as impressive as they would be if they were defined mentalistically because they cannot be used to predict other behavior. Nevertheless, Fasold (1984) argues that the more straightforward behaviorist approach, in which attitudes are just one kind of response to a stimulus, indeed cannot be ruled out.

On the other hand, under the mentalist perspective, attitudes are viewed as an internal mental state, which may give rise to certain forms of behavior. Likewise, it is understood as an intervention variable between an incitement which possibly affect somebody and his response. (see Appel & Muysken, 1987; Fasold, 1984).

In addition, there were some researches had been conducted related to the issue. Dewi and Setiadi (2018) set a questionnaire to English students in order to find their motivation in language attitudes toward English and language choice between English and Bahasa Indonesia at Bina Nusantara University. The qualitative research entitled Language Attitudes and Language Choice in Bilingual Academic Learning Environment found that the students had positive attitude toward English since it is considered essential for their lives. Besides, research entitled Some Language Attitudes towards Bilingualism conducted by Rossi and Saneleuterio (2016). They used the questionnaire to analyze the language attitude of 53 bilingual subjects whose languages were English and Spanish mostly. They found the number of languages where

a person knows his correlation with a language prejudices one could have. Then to distinguish from those previous studies, this research analyzes the language attitude of 4 students from high school who have Singkil language and *Indonesian language* inside and outside their academic environment both quantitatively and qualitatively.

Regarding to explanation above, there is a language attitude in people of Singkil, in this case, are students of senior high school in Singkil regency towards their language and *Indonesian language* as a national language. Therefore, this paper explores this apparent language attitude in Singkil regency by investigating students' attitude of senior high school to their languages (BS) and their attitudes to *Indonesian language* (BI) in order to identify their language attitudes.

## **2. Method**

In this study, Singkil students' attitude will be described in quantitative descriptive method. The researcher explains what it is, in the form of a questionnaire, both quantitatively and qualitatively related to the research findings which come from the main instrument. Blaikie (2000: 232) states that quantitative methods are generally concerned with counting and measuring aspects of social life. The most commonly used quantitative data –gathering methods in the social disciplines are undoubtedly the self-administered questionnaire. In addition, the quantitative descriptive method, aims to describe community-speaking attitudes objectively and accurately from the students who are speaking Singkil language and *Indonesian language*. The method used in this research was descriptive. Data were collected using a questionnaire, and the average number of values (mean) of language attitudes were calculated quantitatively using the Likert technique for a piece characteristic feature. In analyzing the data were analyzed quantitatively for each characteristic feature calculated the average number of values (mean) language attitudes, using a Likert technique. 40 respondents from the students who are speaking Singkil language and *Indonesian language*. Further, the researchers gave the questionnaire on the language attitude of the native speakers toward their language. Concerning the above statements, it is pretty interesting to study about language attitude of Singkil students towards their language and *Indonesian language*.

### **2.1 Research Design**

The concept of research design has a range of meanings, from narrow to broad. The purpose of this design is to ensure a comparison that is not open to different interpretations. Kerlinger and Pedhazur (1973:300) state research design is the plan, structure, and strategy of investigation conceived to obtain answers to research questions and control variance. Further, the researchers used descriptively in this study. Hedrick et al in Blaikie (2000:39) point out that descriptive design as essentially exploratory, or relationship between variables.

### **2.2 Population and Sample**

SMUN 1 at Singkil regency, Aceh, is the location of the research being administered. Amounting to 100 students of this high school then becomes the population of this research. A sample is then allocated to the selected population using the random sampling technique. They were 40 respondents from the students who are speaking Singkil language and *Indonesian language*. Further, the researchers gave the questionnaire on the language attitude of the native speakers toward their language.

### **2.3 Instruments**

The questionnaire consisted of 12 questions, and it covered various questions, namely; the mother tongue (first language), first language skills, the environment in which they live, and the identity of communication or inter-group relationships. The data in this study were obtained with data in the form of different speech events among Singkil speakers who were bilinguals.

### **2.4 Data Analysis**

To acknowledge the language attitude of Singkil students towards their language and their attitude towards *Indonesian language* accurately, the researchers analyze each characteristic feature and use a Likert technique, and it is analyzed on statistical analysis, which calculates

the average number of values (mean) language attitudes. (Creswell 2002, Miles 1984 as cited in Iskandar, 2010, Paltridge, 2015, and Blaikie, 2000) is drawn as follows.

$$(n1 \times 1) + (n2 \times 2) + (n3 \times 3) + (n4 \times 4) + (n5 \times 5)$$

$$n1 + n2 + n3 + n4 + n5$$

n1: strongly agree                      a) 1, 0 to 2, 5 -----negative

n2: agree                                      b) 2, 6 to 5, 0 -----positive

n3: less agree

n4: agree

n5: strongly disagree

### 3. Results and Discussion

#### 3.1 The Attitude of Singkil Students toward Their Language

To assess language attitude, the researchers selected 40 respondents from the students who are speaking Singkil language and *Indonesian language*. The researchers gave the questionnaire on the language attitude of the native speakers toward their language. The questionnaire below describes the respondents need to choose 1, 2, 3, 4, or 5 regarding the statements given in order to show their attitudes toward their own language.

- (1) Completely agree, (2) Agree, (3) Less agree, (4) Disagree, (5) Completely disagree

Table 2 The Questionnaire of Language Attitude towards Singkil Language

1. Singkil language is a tribal identity
2. Singkil language is a communication tool in the environmental community of Singkil regency.
3. Singkil language is used to speak to your friends or neighbors
4. Singkil language is used to express anger
5. Singkil language is used to make a joke with your family
6. Singkil language is used to make or receive a call
7. Singkil language is used in the market
8. Singkil language is used in school
9. Singkil language is used in government offices
10. Singkil language shows the hospitality
11. Singkil language shows the love of the tribe
12. Singkil language shows the cultural wealth that must be preserved and maintained

After giving them the questionnaire, the researchers analyse the data and make them into the table of language attitudes toward two languages as shown in the table 3 below.

Table 3 The Result of Language Attitude of Singkil Students Towards Their Language

Characteristics	Num. Questions	SA	A	LA	DA	SD	Average %	Language Attitude
Language attitude of Singkil students towards their language	1	33	7	0	0	0	4,8	P
	2	5	15	20	0	0	3,6	P
	3	7	9	6	14	4	3	P
	4	5	12	9	11	3	3,1	P
	5	9	18	12	1	0	3,9	P
	6	2	5	17	13	3	2,8	P

7	1	7	19	6	7	2,7	P
8	2	2	15	1	2	2	N
9	2	2	15	16	5	2,5	N
10	34	6	0	0	0	4,9	P
11	29	10	1	0	0	4,7	P
12	25	15	0	0	0	4,6	P

Based on the above results, the researcher finds that the language attitude of Singkil students is dominantly positive, but concerning two questions, it is negative. From 12 questions given to 40 respondents, most of the questions indicate very well from 2-4, 9. This finding indicates that the attitude of Singkil students towards their language is positive. It can be discussed as follows.

(1) Singkil language is a tribal identity.

Singkil language is a communication tool in the environmental community of Singkil regency. Questions 1 and 2 are used to know the existence of Singkil language in respondents' understanding. Based on the questionnaire are filled by respondents, it can be showed that the resulting average in question (1) is 4, 8, whereas question (2) is 3, 6. This result indicates that all respondents strongly agree that the Singkil language is a tribal identity and a communication tool (medium) in the environmental community of Singkil regency.

In line with the above explanation, the below question indicates the relation of intra-group of Singkil speakers towards their environment.

(2) Singkil language is used to speak to your friends or neighbors.

The result found in this question is 3 which means a positive attitude is belonged to the respondents of this research. Question number 4 – 9 presented in this table refers to the frequency of use of language itself according to language events.

- a. Singkil language is used to express anger.
- b. Singkil language is used to make a joke with your family.
- c. Singkil language is used to make or receive a call
- d. Singkil language is used in the market
- e. Singkil language is used in school/office
- f. Singkil language is used in government offices

The above questions direct the researchers to know the intensity of language use of all respondents in any language events such as to express anger, to make jokes, to make or receive a call, use in the market, school, and government offices. Based on the results found from questions 4, 5, 6, and 7, the language attitude of Singkil students is positive from 2, 7 – 3, 9. But it is negative for questions 8 and 9 when Singkil language is used in school and government offices. The three last questions are directing to hospitality, love of tribe, and cultural wealth.

- g. Singkil language shows hospitality.
- h. Singkil language shows the love of tribe.
- i. Singkil language shows the cultural wealth that must be preserved and maintained.

From the three questions above, the result found in Singkil students' attitudes towards their language is very positive from 4, 6 to 4, 9. For the above explanation, it is made clear that respondents' attitudes toward their language are incredibly positive.

### **3.2 The attitude of Singkil students towards Indonesian language**

To grasp about the respondents' attitudes toward Indonesian language, the researchers also gave them a questionnaire with 12 questions requiring the respondents to choose one of the following numbers. There are shown in table 4 I which (1) Strongly agree, (2) Agree, (3) Less agree, (4) Disagree, (5) Strongly disagree.

Table 4 Language Attitude of Singkil Students towards Indonesian language

1. Indonesian language is a national identity
2. Indonesian language is a communication tool in the environmental community of Singkil regency.
3. Indonesian language is used to speak to your friends or neighbors
4. Indonesian language is used to express anger
5. Indonesian language is used to make a joke with your family
6. Indonesian language is used to make or receive a call
7. Indonesian language is used in the market
8. Indonesian language is used in school
9. Indonesian language is used in government offices
10. Indonesian language shows the hospitality
11. Indonesian language shows the love of the tribe
12. Indonesian language shows the cultural enrichment that must be preserved and maintained

After giving them the questionnaire, the researchers analyze the data and makes it into the table of language attitude of Singkil students towards Indonesian language, as presented in the table 5 below.

Table 5 The Result of Language Attitude of Singkil Students  
Towards Indonesian language

Characteristics	Number of question	SA	A	LA	DA	SD	Average	Language Attitude	
		%							
Language attitude of Singkil students towards Indonesian language	1	25	15	0	0	0	4,6	P	
	2	14	25	1	0	0	4,3	P	
	3	1	7	19	6	7	2,7	P	
	4	7	2	8	12	11	2,6	P	
	5	3	4	8	11	14	2,3	N	
	6	1	18	14	7	0	3,3	P	
	7	4	12	11	9	4	3,1	P	
	8	23	17	0	0	0	4,6	P	
	9	20	18	1	0	1	4,4	P	
	10	2	5	17	13	3	2,8	P	
	11	2	1	7	14	16	2	N	
	12	3	4	8	11	14	2,3	N	

Based on the presented results, the researchers find that the language attitude of Singkil students is dominantly positive, but there are three which are negative. From 12 questions given to 40 respondents, most of the questions indicate very well from 2,3 -4, 6. This finding suggests that Singkil students have a positive attitude toward their language. It can be discussed as follows.

- (1) Indonesian language is a national identity.
- (2) Indonesian language is a communication tool in the environmental community of Singkil regency.

Questions 1 and 2 are used to know the existence of *Indonesian language* in respondents' understanding. Based on the questionnaire filled out by respondents, it can be showed that the resulting average in question (1) is 4, 6, whereas question (2) is 4,3. This result indicates that all respondents strongly agree that *Indonesian*

*language* is a national identity and a communication tool (medium) in the environmental community of Singkil regency.

In line with the above explanation, the below question indicates the relation of the intra-group of Singkil students towards their environment.

(3) Indonesian language is used to speak to your friends or neighbors.

The result found in this question is 2, 7. It means that the respondents have a positive attitude. On the other side, some questions presented refer to the frequency of language use according to language events.

(4) Indonesian language is used to express anger.

(5) Indonesian language is used to make a joke with your family.

(6) Indonesian language is used to make or receive a call.

(7) Indonesian language is used in the market.

(8) Indonesian language is used in school/office.

(9) Indonesian language is used in government offices.

The above questions direct the researcher to know the intensity of language use of all respondents in any language events such as expressing anger, making jokes, making or receiving a call, and using in the market, school, and government offices. Based on the results found from questions 4, 6, 7, 8 and 9 the language attitude of Singkil students is positive from 2, 6 – 4, 6. But it is negative for question 5 when Indonesian language is used to make a joke with the family. The three last questions are directing to hospitality, love of tribe, and cultural wealth.

(10) Indonesian language shows hospitality.

(11) Indonesian language shows the love of the tribe.

(12) Indonesian language shows the cultural wealth that must be preserved and maintained.

From the three questions above, the result found in Singkil students' attitudes towards Indonesian language is positive in question 10. But it is a negative attitude for questions 11 and 12 from 2 – 2, 3. Concerning the above explanation, it revealed that respondents' attitude towards Indonesian language is positive.

#### **4. Conclusion**

After analyzing the language attitude of Singkil students towards their language and their attitude towards *Indonesian language*, some conclusions are drawn.

The language attitude of respondents here towards Singkil language is very positive. The condition is shown by the 12 questions offered, which are mainly presented with a positive attitude ranging from 2,7 to 4,8. Otherwise, question 8 and 9 are negative from 2 – 2,5. Therefore, the Singkil students have a positive attitude toward the use of their language.

The language attitude of respondents here towards *Indonesian language* is positive. It can be seen from the 12 questions given are primarily in positive attitude from 2,8 – 4,6. Otherwise, question 5, 11, and 12 are negative from 2 – 2,3. Therefore, the Singkil students have a positive attitude toward the use of Indonesian language.

However, other related studies in the next occasion are believed can be improved by looking deeper towards language attitudes of ones, not only limited to what this study is focused on. Thus, this study hopefully may reveal how the people of Singkil in several areas extensively use *Indonesian language* in their daily communication, and the government of Aceh Province should maintain the sustainability of language in Aceh Province especially Singkil language by showing the uniqueness and richness of linguistics diversity in the region.



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