CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the introduction of the study which consists of the background of the study, the research questions, the aims of the study, the scope of the study, and the significance of the study.

1.1 Background of the Study

Rapid development of Social Media such as Facebook has allowed new varieties of language use to emerge. The term variety here is used to refer to a set of linguistic forms used under specific social circumstances (Holmes, 2001, p. 6). Users of Facebook may belong to a certain community and have their own way or style in communicating with other users. This way or new style of communicating may initiate new varieties. As virtual communications such as Facebook interaction involve written forms of language use, Alay is one of written varieties which can be found. The term Alay is usually used to describe the use of a certain language particularly Indonesian in social media which is different from the use of the language in standard use. Alay variety is believed to be distinctive especially in terms of its written form which includes its spelling system.

In using alay variety, users tend to modify vocabularies of Indonesian, for example, in terms of its spelling system. This modification is mostly done by combining numbers, abbreviations, capitals or lower cases in one word or more.
(Kuswandini, 2009). The creation of ‘new’ writing systems is commonly believed to be results of imitating other users’ writing or users’ own creative inventions.

Using certain varieties, people cannot help but having attitudes towards the varieties that they use or towards other varieties that others use. People generally make judgements which reflect their perceptions or views on certain varieties (Holmes, 2001, p. 343). These judgements convey their attitudes towards the varieties and the users of the varieties. They hold and develop opinions about how one variety may be more favourable than the others.

The way people express their minds through speech or writings do provide clues to others about who they are, where they are from, even into which community they belong to (Holmes, 2001, p. 2). These clues do help to create attitudes towards certain varieties and the users of the varieties. People may have opinions or judgements about somebody from the way he or she writes or talks.

Communicating in the virtual world, one may deal with two terms of style in using language, namely Bahasa Gaul and Alay variety. As the study is aimed at revealing the use of alay variety in particular, the term Bahasa Gaul in this study is intended to attract and stimulate varied responses from the participants. Therefore the study does not put a significant attention to the term. In creating words, the users of an alay variety seem to be so ‘creative’ in making words that people sometimes misunderstand the meaning of the words they create (Kuswandini, 2009). As misunderstanding could be one point which may lead people to misjudge or develop negative attitudes towards the variety, the use of written alay variety in Facebook interaction may be interesting to explore.
There are a lot of studies have been done in the field of language attitudes. One of the research is the work of Lambert in 1960 who used a matched guise technique to investigate the socio-psychological effects of the bilingual situation in Montreal. It was revealed that English-Canadian listeners judged speakers of their own ethnic group more favourably. Meanwhile, French-Canadian listeners not only went along in the same evaluative direction, but also accentuated this in favouring the out group over their own. There is also another research which was conducted by Ryan et.al. (1982). He classified the methods which can be used in language attitudes study. Ryan asserts that there are three methods of language attitudes study. These include an analysis of societal treatment of language varieties, indirect assessment within the speaker evaluation paradigm and direct assessment with interviews or questionnaires.

Studies of language attitudes especially in the field of teen language were also conducted. One of the research was one coming from Tagliamonte and Denis (2008). It was a corpus based analysis concerning the use of IM (Instant Messaging) by teens which were considered to lead to a breakdown in English. The study discovered that the use of IM reflected heterogeneity (variation) and ongoing process of linguistic change of varieties of English.

This research, however, focuses on teens’ language use in the virtual world of Facebook which is concentrated on the alay variety use in the media. Research in the field of alay variety in Indonesia, however, have not been conducted a lot. Several studies which have been conducted especially in the field of alay variety, came from Kuswandini (2009), Ramadhani (2011), and Wicaksosno (2011).
studies mostly revealed that *alay* variety users try to make words appear “cuter”, such as replacing “home” with “humzz” to communicate their ‘unique language’ of their members, to motivate adolescents to seek self-identity and existence, and to express social interactions and relationships among *alay* variety users. These previous studies seem to focus mainly on how users use the variety. The present study aims to reveal not only the use of the variety in *Facebook*, but also attitudes of participants including the users of *alay* variety and ex-users of the variety towards the variety. Furthermore, the present study seeks to disclose the perceptions of the users about the variety they use and the motivations behind the use of the variety.

### 1.2 Research Questions

The research questions of the study are formulated as follows:

1. What are the characteristics of the *alay* variety used in *Facebook*
2. What are the motivations behind the use of the *alay* variety in *Facebook*
3. What are the attitudes of ex-users and users towards the *alay* variety?

### 1.3 Aims of the Study

The study aims to reveal the use of the *alay* variety in *Facebook* media. Moreover, it aims to reveal the attitudes of ex-users towards the variety and the users. In addition, the present study attempts to disclose the perceptions of the users about the variety they use and the motivations behind the use of the variety.

*Widya Astuti, 2013*

*Language Attitudes towards Written Alay Variety in Facebook Interaction*

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1.4 Scope of the Study

The study specifically investigates Facebook interactions in terms of the language use in the media. It examines the use of non-standard forms of language, especially Indonesian. These non-standard forms are called alay variety, written forms which, for example, combine lower cases, upper cases, and numbers in one certain word or phrase, and also use punctuations incorrectly (Kuswandini 2009; Candra 2010; Wicaksono 2010). The study examines linguistic features of alay variety focusing on the spelling of words of the variety. It particularly analyses linguistic forms or words with the spelling which deviates from the standard spelling.

The investigation covers examinations of Facebook statuses, and wall to wall or timeline interactions between the users of the Facebook account and other users.

1.5 Significance of the Study

This study is expected to describe the phenomenon of written alay variety use in Facebook interaction and the attitudes towards the use of the variety. The investigation of the alay variety can enrich the knowledge in sociolinguistics especially in the field of language attitudes. It can also enrich the knowledge in the field of teen language and teen language use in virtual media. Teachers or
educators, for example, can understand more about the feelings and creativities of teenagers especially in expressing their minds in written forms.

In addition, the study of the *alay* variety can provide information of how an independent language such as Indonesian stands among other new language varieties such as *alay* variety.

### 1.6 Research Methodology

#### 1.6.1 Research Design

The study employs a descriptive method to describe and interpret the data. It primarily uses a qualitative approach in analyzing the data considering the purpose of this study is to authentically capture the phenomenon of human linguistic experience which is *alay* variety use in *Facebook*.

#### 1.6.2 Site and Participants of the Study

The study was conducted to 20 Indonesian *Facebook* users who were purposively selected. As many as 10 participants were categorised as the users of the *alay* variety. They are people who were considered not to observe norms of standard written variety. Meanwhile the 10 other people were categorised as ex-users of *alay* variety. They are people who used to write in *alay* variety style but now primarily observe the norms of standard written variety. In addition, the study used questionnaires distributed to two categories of participants; the users of *alay* variety and ex-users, questioning their attitudes towards the variety.
1.6.3 Data Collection

The data were collected from the *walls* of the accounts of the participants (internet based source). The data did not cover every part of the *Facebook* accounts of the participants; rather, they covered the parts related to the study. Furthermore, the data and examples to analyze were drawn from relevant sources which were taken from websites (which are listed clearer at the references).

In addition, the data of the study were also obtained from the results of questionnaires distributed to the participants who were divided into two categories: the users of *alay* variety and ex-users (see site and participants of the study).

1.6.4 Data Analysis

The data gathered from related websites and questionnaires were analysed as follows:

1. Classifying sample data from related websites (*Facebook*) including the status written by the participants and other related postings of the wall or the timeline of the participants;
2. Classifying or mapping the results based on categories;
3. Analysing the results of categorisation;
4. Classifying the results of the questionnaires to answer research questions;
5. Analysing the results of the questionnaires;
6. Interpreting the results of data collection;
Presenting the results using a descriptive method to describe the use of alay variety in social media, Facebook, and further the motivations behind the use of alay variety and attitudes of users and ex-users towards the variety.

1.7 Clarification of Terms

To avoid misconceptions and misunderstandings, there are some significant terms have to be clarified as follows:

1) Alay: Alay is a term used to refer to a written variety that actually derives from Indonesian or English, but is modified especially in terms of words’ spelling systems which is mostly done by mixtures or combinations of numbers, abbreviation, capitals and lower cases (Kuswandini 2009; Candra 2010; Wicaksono 2010).

2) Walls or Timeline: Wall or Timeline is an important part of a Facebook profile, where friends can leave public messages for one another (Urban Dictionary.com, Facebook.com).

1.8 Organisation of the Paper

The paper consists of five chapters including Introduction, Literature Review, Research Method, Findings and Discussion, and the Conclusion of the study.

Chapter one or Introduction introduces the background of the study, the formulation of the problems or research questions, the aims of the study, the scope
of the study, the significance of the study, the research method and design, clarification of the terms used in the study, and finally the organisation of the paper.

Chapter two or Literature Review contains related theories used as the foundation of the study and previous studies conducted in the field of Alay variety. The theories reviewed in the chapter are about language and variety, word formation, language choice, language attitudes, teen and language, and a brief review of related previous research in the field of language attitudes and teen language.

Chapter three or Research Method covers the methodology of the study including the research design, participants of the study, the resources of the data or data collection, and the steps and procedures in analysing the data which were gathered. Finally, the chapter displays examples of data analysis of the study presented further in chapter four.

Chapter four presents the results of the study. It consists of the findings of the research and the discussion of the findings that answer the problems of the study.

Chapter five provides the conclusions of the study, an interpretation toward the findings or the results of the study. It also presents suggestions for further future research in the same field.
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