RESEARCHING INDONESIAN STUDENTS' ATTITUDE TOWARDS FOREIGN LANGUAGE

Ardi Marwan

Politeknik Negeri Pontianak

Abstract: Foreign language attitude plays a significant role in enhancing ones' motivation to learn a particular foreign language. This study aims to obtain an understanding of Indonesian students' attitude towards Japanese language. The data were collected from 160 students learning Japanese. Foreign language attitude questionnaire (FLAQ) originally developed by Pierson et al. (1980) was used in this study. Further, attitude factors identified by Pennington and Yu (1994) following the result of FLAQ factor analysis was also incorporated in the current research. It is evident in this study that the majority of students showed positive attitude towards Japanese language. That is, they showed no negative orientation towards this foreign language and culture. The study also observed no significant differences in attitude towards Japanese language between male and female students (p>.05). Both males and females responded positively on their Japanese language learning and use.

Keywords: Japanese language, attitude, motivation, learning success.

Abstrak: Sikap pembelajar terhadap pembelajaran bahasa asing mempunyai peran yang signifikan dalam meningkatkan motivasi pembelajar. Artikel ini bertujuan untuk memperoleh deskripsi mendalam tentang sikap siswa Indonesia terhadap bahasa Jepang. Data diperoleh dari 160 responden yang belajar bahasa Jepang. Penelitian ini tidak hanya menggunakan FLAQ (Foreign Language Attitude Questionnaire) yang dikembangkan oleh Pierson dan lain lain (1980) tetapi juga mengunakan faktor sikap yang dirumuskan oleh Pennington dan Yu (1994) berdasarkan hasil analisa FLAQ. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa sebagian besar siswa menunjukkan sikap yang positif terhadap bahasa Jepang. Hal ini ditunjukkan dengan tidak adanya orientasi negatif terhadap pembelajaran bahasa asing dan budayanya. Penelitian ini juga menunjukkan bahwa tidak ada perbedaan yang signifikan terhadap bahasa Jepang antara siswa perempuan dan siswa laki-laki (p>.05) yang berarti mereka merespon positif terhadap pembelajaran bahasa Jepang dan kegunaannya

Kata-Kata Kunci: Bahasa Jepang, sikap, motivasi, dan sukses belajar

The research reported in this study was attitude of Indonesian students towards conducted in Indonesia investigating the Japanese Language learning. Its execution

was inspired mainly by the fact that there has been an increasing popularity of Japanese Language learning in Indonesia. According to the ambassador of Japan to Indonesia, Mr. Watanabe (2009), the number of Japanese learners in Indonesia has now reached 73 thousand people.

The increasing number of Japanese language learners in Indonesia is likely to be triggered by a number of factors. Firstly, Japan is known in the world for its educational quality, particularly tertiary education such as technical college and university. This phenomenon has attracted the interest of many Indonesian students (e.g., secondary school students wishing to undertake diploma or undergraduate study or undergraduate students planning to do postgraduate study in Japan) to learn Japanese language (and culture). Secondly, Japan is also known as an industrialized country as indicated, for example, by the fast growth of its industries and economy. Because of its industrial and economic growth, this country is indeed in high demand of overseas professional workers who can meet the shortage of workers in the country. This situation has also attracted the interest of Indonesian people, particularly those who wish to work in Japan, to learn the Japanese language.

Next, every year Japanese government significant number of scholarships for Indonesian people to undertake further studies in Japan. The programs offered vary ranging from nondegree study such as teacher training courses to degree study (e.g. diploma, bachelor, masters and doctorate). This scholarship offer has also been one of the main factors motivating Indonesian people to learn Japanese language. In addition to these factors, there may also be other personal reasons (e.g. business, social visit, etc) which have attracted the interest of Indonesian people to learn Japanese language.

Despite the increasing popularity of this fast growing foreign language in Indonesia, there has been inadequate research to describe the attitude of Indonesian people towards this language and its learning. As a result, there is a lack of direction regarding the Japanese language teaching and learning in the country. In fact, according to Young (2006), understanding learners' foreign language (L2) learning is very important because through this understanding teachers as well as other related parties can obtain "some useful insights" which they can use to improve the quality of its teaching and learning (p.479). This is also important as learners' attitude towards L2, its speakers and the learning context may help explain their chance to succeed in their foreign language learning (Candlin & Mercer, 2001; Erlenawati, 2002; Ghazali, 2008; Nunan & Lamb, 1996; Ushida, 2005).

To fill in the gap in the research body, this study was designed to examine the attitude of students towards Japanese as a foreign language and its learning in Indonesia.

Prior to examining students' attitudes, it is very useful to develop our understanding as to the meaning of 'attitude'. There are many definitions of attitude which can be located from second and foreign language research literature and some of which are now presented in this part of the paper.

Attitude in Longman Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics written by Richards (2002) is defined as,

Expressions of positive or negative feelings towards a language. These expressions may reflect impressions of linguistic difficulty or simplicity, ease or difficulty of learning, degree of importance, elegance, social status, etc. Attitude towards a language may also show what people feel about the speakers of that language. (p. 199)

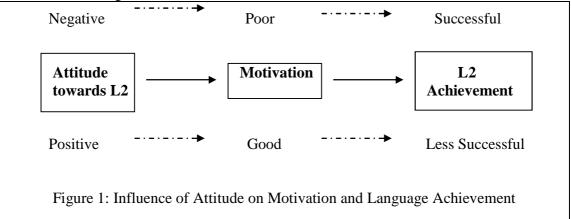
Pointed out in a similar sense, Eveyik (1999, p. 21) describes attitude as "a

person's state of readiness to respond to a situation and... to behave in a consistent manner towards an object or objects". Object, in the current context, is referred to as a foreign language being learnt or any things related to it including culture and the native speakers. Some researchers see attitude as a set of beliefs. In other words, they make no distinction between attitude and belief. Thus, Ramirez (1995), for defines foreign or second example, language attitude as " a set of beliefs that learners hold about the community and people who speak the target language, about the language, and the learning task itself" (p. 165). So, it can be concluded that language attitude is about individuals' feelings towards the language they are using or learning and other peripherals or things associated with it.

Research has suggested the importance of attitude in second or foreign language teaching and learning (e.g. Chamber, 1999; Storm, 2007). Storm (2007), for instance, asserts that learners' degree of attitude has an impact on their learning motivation. That is, learners who have negative attitude will usually not be motivated to learn the foreign language and vice versa. Motivated learners, in this regard, can be described as

the persons who are "eager to learn the language, willing to expend effort on learning activity, and willing to sustain the learning activity" (1985, p. 10). They who have these characteristics will usually be able to "study regularly and productively in order to take every opportunity to perfect their language skills" (Ushida, 2005, p. 67). Furthermore, they can also, as Ushida adds, manage their learning even if they have to study independently or without being controlled by teachers. From this viewpoint, it is apparent that only those who are motivated in their learning will have the opportunity to attain success in their L2 endeavors (Chamber, 1999).

This phenomenon (i.e. the influence of attitude on L2 learning motivation) has been well observed in Gardner's (2000) study (as described in Figure 1) reporting that there was a clear influence of attitude on motivation and thus. influencing learning achievement. Gardner revealed that learners showing good achievement in the study were basically those who had positive attitude towards L2 learning. Based on this fact, he therefore concluded that attitudes have an influence on learning motivation and achievement.



Having considered Gardner's study, Ushida (2000) encourages the institution and teachers in charge of the L2 teaching to always think of ways to create a positive or

good learning situation for accommodating effective L2 learning. According to her, without this, learners may easily feel negative about their language learning. This

notion is further supported by Nunan and Lamb (1996) who argue that the situation or context in which learning is taking place can play a significant influence on learners, particularly in terms of their attitude towards L2 learning. Drawing from this notion, it therefore can be implied that learners' attitude is not merely influenced by the internal factors such as their interest and expectation but are also affected by external factors such as the L2 setting or context and the approaches teachers use in their teaching (Dörnyei, 1994; Erlenawati, 2002).

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the attitude of Indonesian students towards Japanese language and Japanese language learning. In addition, this study is also aimed to identify learners' attitude across individual differences. The research questions of this study, therefore, were worded as follows: (1) What are the attitudes of Indonesian students toward Japanese language and Japanese language learning?, and (2) Are there any significant differences in attitudes toward Japanese between male and female students?

The first question is worth investigating because little research has been conducted to examine the attitude of Indonesian students towards Japanese language and Japanese language learning. Then, the second is very important as the information can be used by educators, particularly, Japanese language teachers, and other relevant parties to gain an insight into the possible differences in terms of Japanese language teaching and learning across individual differences.

METHOD

The study took place at a senior secondary school located in the City of Pontianak, Indonesia. In this school, Japanese language is a compulsory subject and taught to all students from year 10 to

12. Prior to collecting data, permission was sought from the school principal.

The questionnaires were distributed to around 200 students who were given two days to have them return to the researcher. The participants were also informed that their participation was voluntary and could withdraw at any time during the research process. After two days, only 160 participants could return the questionnaires on time. So, the participation rate is 80%.

Foreign language attitude questionnaire (FLAQ) consisting of 22 items developed by Pierson, Fu, and Sik-Yum (1980) was used as the tool for gathering information about students' attitude towards Japanese language learning. FLAQ or its modified version has been used in several studies (e.g.Pennington & Yu, 1994; Young, 2006) and therefore can be argued to be a valid tool that can be used for measuring students' foreign language attitude. To suit the context of this study (Japanese language learning), one item was removed and some were amended or modified. The most important modification conducted was related to the replacement of the word 'English' to 'Japanese'.

The 22 items, following the result of factor analysis conducted by Pennington and Yu (1994) could be further grouped into a number of factors (7 factors) in which each pointing to "[Japanese] as detracting from cultural identity, positive orientation towards [Japanese], social and instrumental value of [Japanese], positive orientation to educational and official status of [Japanese], lack of discomfort about Indonesian speaking [Japanese], positive cognitive-effective orientation [Japanese], and disjunction of views on intrinsic quality of [Japanese] language and [Japanese]-based culture" (p.10).

In this questionnaire, the respondents were requested to check one response out of four possible responses provided right next to every item listed. These responses were

strongly agree (1), agree (2), disagree (3), and strongly disagree (4). Numbers were used herein to enable the process of data entry and calculation. In this study, the participants were given freedom whether to provide their responses through paper or online questionnaires.

and inferential Both descriptive statistics were incorporated in the process of data analysis and SPSS version 15 was used to enable this process. Prior to performing the analysis, codebook was developed and data were cleaned in order to locate the missing responses and identify errors. Firstly, the average (mean) score of each item was calculated and followed with the calculation of means of attitude factors. Then, to identify whether or not significant differences occurred between male and female students, independent sample t-test procedure was performed.

RESULTS

The students' overall responses (presented in mean score and standard deviation) are presented in table 1. Then, students' responses grouped according to the seven factors identified by Pennington and Yu (1994) (as a result of factors analysis) are shown in table 2.

The results of the study, overall, indicated that Indonesian students had positive attitude toward Japanese. The associated information with cultural identity, for example, showed that most of them did not feel that learning or using Japanese would make them lose their cultural identity. That is, they generally disagreed (M= 2.90, SD= .45) with the *'When* following statements: Japanese, I do not feel that I am Indonesian anymore; At times I fear that by using Japanese I will become like a foreigner, and if I use Japanese, it means that I am not patriotic'. Also, orientation towards Japanese was positive. They, for instance,

maintained that they would 'learn Japanese even if it is not a compulsory subject at school' (M = 1.94, SD = .77) and there was no need to 'force them to learn this important language' (M = 2.23, SD = .89).

More interestingly, the students taking part in this study could observe the contribution that Japanese language has given to 'Indonesia's prosperity development' (M = 2.11, SD = .84) and the influence of this language on enhancing one's status in the work or social community and family (e.g. Item 1: M = 1.84, SD = .70). To further confirm their favor towards Japanese, they disagreed with the idea to translate the language of their textbooks from Japanese to Indonesian (M = 3.11, SD = .67) and to replace the medium of instruction they currently have at school (i.e. in their Japanese class) from Japanese to Indonesian (M = 2.64, SD = .68).

The students also showed no bad feeling when hearing other Indonesians speaking Japanese (M = 2.97, SD = .41). On the contrary, they felt that their use of Japanese language could help them understand Japanese people and their cultures (M = 1.40, SD = .53). Thus, they wished that they could speak Japanese fluently and accurately (M = 1.34, SD = .51)and found that the Japanese sound was interesting (M = 1.91, SD = .49). In short, they were so happy to be given the opportunity to learn Japanese and to get to know Japanese cultures (e.g. Japanese films, M = 1.89, SD = .64).

This study also sought to observe if there were any significant differences in attitude towards Japanese language between male and female students. To test if significant differences occurred, analysis was performed. It was evident that there were no significant differences in 7 attitude factors between male and female students (p > .05). The significance levels of each factor are as follows: factor 1 (p = .70), factor 2 (p = .71), factor 3 (p = .71), factor 4

(p = .81), factor 5 (p = .45), factor 6 (p = .65) and factor 7 (p = .67).

Table 1: Means and standard deviations for each FLAQ item

Statement	Mean*	Std. Deviation
1. Japanese is the mark of an educated person	1.81	.70
2. When using Japanese, I do not feel that I am Indonesian any more.	2.64	.78
3. If I use Japanese, I will be praised and approved of by my family, relatives and friend	2.23	.86
4. At times I fear that by using Japanese I will become like a foreigner	2.87	.76
5. I should not be forced to learn Japanese	2.23	.89
6. To read Japanese magazines is a kind of enjoyment	1.81	.76
7. I do not feel awkward when using Japanese	2.30	.74
8. I love conversing with foreigners in Japanese	1.58	.74
9. The Indonesian language is superior to Japanese	2.02	.93
10. I like to see Japanese-speaking films	1.89	.64
11. If I use Japanese, it means that I am not patriotic	3.23	.50
12. If I use Japanese, my status is raised	2.25	.73
13. I feel uncomfortable when hearing one Indonesian speaking to another in Japanese	3.04	.67
14. My history, geography, and mathematics textbooks should be written or translated into Indonesian	3.11	.67
15. I wish that I could speak fluent and accurate Japanese	1.34	.51
16. I feel uneasy and lack confidence when speaking Japanese	2.34	.83
17. The use of Japanese is one of the most crucial factors which has contributed to the success of Indonesia's prosperity and development today	2.11	.84
18. The Japanese language sounds very nice	1.91	.49
19. I would take Japanese even if it were not a compulsory subject at school	1.94	.77
20. I feel uneasy when hearing an Indonesian speaking Japanese	2.91	.68
21. Japanese should not be a medium of instruction in the schools in Indonesia	2.64	.68
22. The command of Japanese is very helpful in understanding foreigners and their cultures	1.40	.53

^{*1 =} Strongly Agree 2 = Agree 3 = Disagree 4= Strongly Disagree

Table 2: Attitude Factors

Table 2. Attitude Lactors			
Attitude Factor	Mean*	Std. Deviation	
Factor 1(item 2, 4 and 11):			
Japanese as not detracting from cultural identity.	2.91	.45	
Factor 2 (item 5, 6, 8, 16 and 19): Positive orientation towards Japanese.	1.98	.41	
Factor 3 (item 1, 3, 12, and 17): Social and instrumental value of Japanese.	2.09	.53	
Factor 4 (item 14 and 21) Positive orientation to educational and official status of Japanese.	2.87	.36	
Factor 5 (item 13 and 20): Lack of discomfort about Indonesian speaking Japanese.	2.97	.53	
Factor 6 (item 15 and 22): Positive cognitive affective orientation towards Japanese.	1.36	.45	
Factor 7 (item 10 and 18): Disjunction of views on intrinsic quality of Japanese language and Japanese-based culture.	1.89	.39	

^{*1 =} Strongly Agree 2 = Agree 3 = Disagree 4= Strongly Disagree

DISCUSSION

This study managed identify to Indonesian students' positive attitude towards Japanese language. Interestingly, students responded majority of the positively to all attitude factors despite the lack of popularity of this language in Indonesia if compared to English. It is a good indication that there is a positive feeling and enthusiasm among Indonesians about the existence of Japanese language in the social and professional community. Considering this phenomenon, it is likely that the number of Japanese language learners in Indonesia will double this year from around 73 thousand people last year.

What is more important (than just the increase in number) is that there is a great chance for Indonesian learners, particularly those within this research context, to be successful in their Japanese language learning. As Storm (2007) suggested, attitude is the key factor which influences ones' success in their foreign language learning. Ushida (2000) and Nunan and Lamb (1996), however, warned that learners' positive attitude towards FL or L2 may decline if the factors which contribute to their attitude formation experience a negative change. Such factors include, among others, learning situation, context and environment. Thus, continuous efforts have to be made to ensure that all the supporting factors are always in a good form. This is also to say that learning a foreign language is complex. That is, to help learners succeed in their learning, all the relevant parties (e.g. teachers, school administrators, fund providers, etc) should

work collaboratively to aid learners go through this complex process otherwise their FL learning will not gain any progresses. Collaborative work is highly emphasized here because research has shown that the work of one party alone (e.g. teachers) is not sufficient to make learners achieve their learning goals.

This research also observed importance of obtaining a good understanding of learners' specific attitude towards the foreign language being learnt. First, it is a good idea to get to know whether learners feel threatened with the culture of the foreign language they currently or intend to learn (i.e. afraid of loosing their cultural identity). If they do, then actions need to be taken to overcome misconception. They should informed that learning a foreign language will not make them lose their cultural identity unless if they have an intention to do so. This is also to clarify that learning a foreign language has little or nothing to do with ones' loss of cultural identity. Usually, the persons who experience this (i.e. losing their cultural identity) are the ones who do not want to maintain their cultural status. Rather, they wish to be associated with another culture which in this case may be the one attached to the foreign language being learnt or can be the one that has no connection with the FL they are learning.

Second, finding out if the students are happy to learn and be exposed to Japanese language is also recommended. This information is very useful to see if they have positive or negative orientation towards the Japanese. Students who feel forced to learn this language will not benefit much from their learning because there is no sense of enjoyment in the learning process. Students who dislike their FL learning will usually lack motivation to learn (Gardner, 2000). Gardner, in his study, has proven that positive feeling (e.g. feeling of enjoyment) towards FL is so

important. It is an integral part in the language learning process. This notion implies that a success in FL learning is difficult to be attained if a joyful learning is absent in the learning process. Again, this phenomenon should be taken into consideration by the relevant parties, particularly teachers. The teachers, for instance, should continuously evaluate their approaches. They need to always ask whether their approaches are suitable with their students' need and situation. Also important to be asked is whether their teaching enables students to learn in a stress free environment. Other parties, such as school administration and funding providers office of education) are responsible for creating a joyful learning atmosphere for students. This, for example, can be done through the incorporation of Information and Communication Technology (e.g. through interactive learning using computer mediated communication or CMC). It is believed that its presence can enhance learning quality. The school administration, therefore, should support learners with quality technological tools and provide teachers the trainings they need to effectively incorporate ICT into their FL teaching. In short, language teaching and learning also need technological support.

Third, students' perception about the social value of Japanese language is also useful to be asked. This information can be used to understand students' feeling about others' response on their foreign language learning and use. The worst case is that they are not supported for learning a foreign language by their family. Although this is a rare case, this phenomenon may happen particularly within the context of traditional Indonesia where negative beliefs about learning a FL are still likely to be found. If such a case is encountered, efforts to reverse the condition should be made. Students and their families should be informed as to the benefits of learning and

mastering a foreign language including Japanese. Then, those who are praised for their Japanese language learning should be advised to take this rare opportunity to always improve the quality of their learning efforts so that they can soon be a proficient user of Japanese.

Fourth, raising the idea to possibly use medium language as instruction at schools in Indonesia is highly encouraged. This question is basically meant to further confirm students' positive feeling about the use of Japanese in Indonesia rather than to expect for the change of Japanese language status from FL to official language. The later is hardly possible to be realized in the near future. Fifth, it is also a good idea to identify whether students have a bad feeling when seeing other people speak Japanese. It is not uncommon, particularly in the context where a certain language is spoken as a foreign language (e.g. the case of Japanese language in Indonesia), to see people who dislike to see others speaking in another language. Those who have positive attitude will certainly show no objection to this situation. Conversely, others with negative attitude will not be supportive to such a situation. Knowing this is very useful to ensure that all students can use Japanese language at anytime and anywhere they like without feeling worried that they will be hated by others.

Finally, questions asking about students' understanding of cultures (e.g. films, people) associated with the foreign language being learnt are also useful to be put forward. This is so because language is part of a certain nation's culture. That is, understanding the language will help students better understand the culture it is attached to. Again, these questions are meant to further confirm students' attitude towards Japanese language. In short, all the above questions are important to be addressed so that teachers can get a good

understanding of learners' overall attitude towards foreign language.

This study also observed the differences in attitude towards Japanese language between male and female students. It is evident from the results that there were no significant differences in all attitude factors males females. between and phenomenon indicates that both male and female learners show similar responses. That is, they all think positively about their learning and use of Japanese language. It also implies that teachers do not need to worry about gender issue in their FL teaching (e.g. giving extra attention to female or male students).

CONCLUSION

This study sought to obtain an understanding of Indonesian students' attitude towards Japanese language. It was carried out within the framework of quantitative research. Data were collected using a questionnaire (FLAQ) measuring students' attitude towards Japanese language.

This study has a number of limitations. Firstly, the findings reported in this research are based on the responses provided by Japanese language learners studying at a high school in Indonesia. That is, the voices of other learners studying at different educational settings (e.g. Japanese language courses or universities) are not heard. Involving those coming from different settings may provide a more understanding comprehensive as students' attitude towards Japanese language. Thus, further research can be oriented to invite students from various educational settings.

Secondly, the use of closed-ended questionnaires in this research limits students' freedom to express their ideas or opinions about their attitude towards Japanese language. Thus, the information obtained in this study can only be used to get a general picture as to Indonesian students' attitude towards Japanese language. Should a deep understanding become the target, a further investigation conducted using qualitative approach is a must.

Also, this study did not seek to identify the influence of Japanese language attitude on students' Japanese learning achievement. In fact, obtaining this understanding is very important for further revealing the benefits of having positive attitude and the disadvantages of possessing negative attitude. Finally, similar study conducted in a different country is also another possibility to see if similar or different trends occur.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

I would like to greatly thank Sumitomo Foundation for making this research possible through its financial support.

REFERENCES

- Candlin, C., & Mercer, N. (2001). *English language teaching in its social context*. New York: Routledge.
- Chamber, G. N. (1999). *Motivating language learners* Clevedon: Multilingual Matters Ltd.
- Dörnyei, Z. (1994). Motivation and motivating in the language foreign language classroom. *The Modern Language Journal*, 78(3), 273-284.
- Erlenawati, S. (2002). Beliefs about language learning: Indonesian learners' perspectives, and some implucations for classroom practices. *Australian Journal of Education*, 46(3), 323-337.
- Eveyik, E. (1999). Development of an attitude scale to investigate Turkish EFL teachers' attitudes. Istanbul: Boğaziçi Üniversitesi Sosyal Bilimler Enstitüsü.
- Gardner, R. C. (1985). Social psychology and second language learning: The role

- of attitudes and motivation. London: Edward Arnold.
- Gardner, R. C. (2000). Correlation, causation, motivation and second language acquisition. *Canadian Psychology*, 41(1-24).
- Ghazali, S. N. (2008). Learner background and their attitudes towards studying literature. *Malaysian Journal of ELT Research*(4), 1-17.
- Nunan, D., & Lamb, C. (1996). The selfdirected teacher: Managing the learning process. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Pennington, M. C., & Yu, F. (1994). English and Chinese in Hong Kong: pre-1997 language attitudes. *World Englishes*, 13(1), 1-20.
- Pierson, H. D., Fu, G. S., & Sik-Yum, L. (1980). An analysis of the relationship between language attitudes and English attainment of secondary school students in Hongkong. *Language Learning*, 30, 289-316.
- Ramirez, A. G. (1995). Creating contexts for second language acquisition. New York: Longman.
- Richards, S. (2002). Longman dictionary of language teaching and applied linguistics. London: Longman.
- Storm, T., M. (2007). Pupils' attitudes towards foreign-language learning and the development of literacy skills in bilingual education. *Teaching and Teacher Education*, 23(2), 226-235.
- Ushida, E. (2005). The role of students' attitudes and motivation in second language learning in online language courses. *CALICO Journal*, 23(1), 49-78.
- Watanabe, T. (2009). Jepang Beri Bantuan 44,4 Juta Yen untuk IPB. Retrieved from http://ppi-
- okayama.org/?page=buletin&ed=199704 Young, M., Y, C (2006). Macao students' attitudes toward English: A post-1999 survey. *World Englishes*, 25(3/4), 479-490.