

PARENTS' AND CHILDREN'S LANGUAGE IN A BILINGUAL COMMUNITY IN SLEMAN

Ismiati

Sekolah Tinggi Bahasa Asing (STBA) LIA Yogyakarta

Alamat Korespondensi: Jl. Lingkar Utara, Pandeansari IV/8, Condongcatur,
Depok, Sleman

Abstract

This paper aims at describing the parent-children's language in a bilingual community in Sleman. Bilingual parents of Bahasa Indonesia and Javanese were observed when they were having conversations with their children. This research wanted to find out the parents-and-children's language in their communication at home. Therefore, this research attempted to find the answers to the following research objectives: (1) the language that the bilingual parents use to communicate with their children; (2) the parents' background and perception in using the language. This research used observations and interviews as the methods for data collection. As for the analysis, the data was analyzed using the descriptive quantitative method. The participants of this research were of ten families of Javanese ethnic with children who lived in Sleman. The result shows that the language use in the parents-children conversation tends to use Bahasa (60%) rather than Javanese (40%). Parents with lower education and manual works use Javanese and families with higher education and office works use Indonesia.

Keywords: language, parent, children, bilingual, education, work

INTRODUCTION

This paper aimed to study the language used in parent-children conversation and to study the parent's perception on the languages. The writer was interested to do the research as she observed that among the Javanese families, some of the families used Indonesian language more when they talked to their children. The writer thinks that this research is important because the language of a family has a great influence in determining the mother tongue of the children and the other language they can master in the future. For the society, when those children grow up and become parents in the future, what language they master will determine the future of the bilingualism situation in the society.

The bilingual communities in Sleman speak Indonesian and Javanese languages. The Indonesian language is the official national language. The Javanese language is one of the local/regional languages among the 707 available in Indonesia's 13,466 islands. Before 1945, the regional languages serve as the language of communication or the vernacular, in this case, in Sleman, we have the Javanese as the vernacular. After the promotion of the



Indonesian language as the only national language through a language policy, a new language situation has arisen in Indonesia. In Sleman, the intrusion of Indonesian into the Javanese community in Java is unavoidable. This happens since Indonesian is the language used in educational institutions, in offices, in media and many more, while Javanese serves only as the vernacular. The building of the nationalism, one among its many elements is through language (in our case, we have Indonesian language), has encouraged people to consciously use the Indonesian language as part of their national identity. When Javanese people use Indonesian consciously? What happens in their Javanese mastery?, and when we refer to family and children, will this situation influence the bilingualism in Sleman and its future?

Sleman is part of Yogyakarta province located in the Central Java. As one of the provinces in Java Island, Yogyakarta is known as the center of Javanese culture since the Javanese royal palace was built here and still operates until today. The main core of Javanese culture, the last surviving Javanese royal monarchy is here, the Yogyakarta Royal Palace. Because of this, there has been common assumption that people of Yogyakarta are good in their Javanese language. Javanese language has three levels of politeness. The first level is the low level or *ngoko*. This particular type is the most widely spoken version of Javanese. The next level is the middle level or named as *krama madya* or *krama alus*. The last is the high level or named as *krama inggil*. The differences between the levels are represented in the different vocabularies. While for Indonesian, there is no such thing as these three politeness levels. The politer level in Indonesian is represented by the formal type in which the difference with the less polite or the informal are in its completeness in its clause.

The problems can be formulated into the following questions: 1) What language do the bilingual parent use to talk to their children?; and 2) Why do the parents choose the language? The research is limited on the language used in the conversation between parent and children. The second limitation is on the reasons of the parents in their choice of language. These limitations are set based on the considerations of limited time and the depth of the discussion. For the objectives of the research, the writer aims at finding the language use in the conversation between parent and children and finding the reasons of the parents in their choice of language.

In this research, to find the answers to the research questions, the writer applied the methods of observation and interview to collect the data. The number of the participants consisted of ten families. The families were chosen of the families who have children under 18 years old. The parents were selected to those of Javanese ethnic with bilingual ability, particularly in Indonesian and Javanese. The families were also selected of those who live in Sleman. The parent's educational backgrounds were also noted. The methods applied were observation and interview. The observation was done to learn and to witness the real use of language between parent and children. Observation is a data collection method in which the researcher does not participate in the interactions. The observation was applied to research the language used in parent-children conversation. The interview performed is the semi-structured interview. Gill et

al., (2008) define this approach as an interview that has several key questions which help to define the areas to be explored, but also allow the researcher the flexibility to pursue an idea in a response in more detail. The semi-structured interview is done to collect the data concerning the parent's backgrounds (ethnicity, education, origin) and their opinions, perceptions and attitudes towards the use of language in the family. Then, the data obtained is analyzed using the descriptive quantitative as suggested by Mahsun and Fishman.

Similar researches have been worked on in the field of language choice among bilingual speakers. One of those researches is the PhD Thesis entitled *Children's Language in East Java* by Slamet Setiawan. In this research, Setiawan found that the East Java children in Malang preferred to speak in Javanese rather than Indonesian language. Another research on similar topic was the research did by Risnawaty Nuzwaty, Muhammad Ali Pawiro, and Liesna Andriany. Their research report was "Language Choice by Bilingual Speech Community of Acehnese in Family Domain in Medan: A Case Study." In this study, they found that the average percentage of the language choice in every single speech situation among the husbands and the wives was 86% and the wives to the husbands was 82% dominantly Acehnese. The average percentage of the language choice among sons and daughters to their parents or vice versa was 76% constantly mixing language; Acehnese/Indonesian in all of speech situations. The families mostly maintained their tribe language well.

Those researches are different since the writer's research is on the language in parents-children conversation at home domain who live in Sleman.

THEORETICAL REVIEW

Bilingualism

Bilingualism can be distinguished into two different types, societal bilingualism and individual bilingualism. Societal bilingualism refers to the bilingual situation in a community, while the individual bilingualism refers to the bilingual ability of a person. Societal bilingualism occurs when in a given society two or more languages are spoken. Hoffmann's definition of societal bilingualism as the presence of two or more languages in that setting, without implying that all (or most) of the members of the group have competence in those languages (1991: 10). In Sleman, the bilingualism is represented by the society's mastery of Indonesian language and Javanese language. For older people, they tend to have a better proficiency in their Javanese than in their Indonesian. For younger people, the situation is the contrary. Younger people tend to have better proficiency in Indonesian than in Javanese. Bilingualism does not require equal fluency in both of the languages. But the less fluency can mean that the language is less frequently used and this results in the decline in the proficiency. As Leinonen and Tendeftel stated, "the less a language is used, the more difficult it becomes to develop and maintain the proficiency in it" (188). Based on this discussion, we assume that if for younger people Javanese is less frequently used than Indonesian language, it can end up in the decline of the Javanese language proficiency. In long term, the decline in the proficiency can result in the language shift.

Language shift

Language shift is a language phenomenon in which the language users gradually turn to another language because of some reasons. Language shift is the result of a long term language choice. The bilingual or multilingual situation provides the language users of choices of language. There will be a situation in which the language users feel more ease with one particular language over the other(s). This can give a rise to a language. The rise of a language can make other language weaker or even dying.

There are some factors of a language shift; for example, immigration, industrialization, politics, and social changes. The proclamation of a language as the official language and which is followed by nation policies and regulations can drive language users to choose one over the other(s). In our case, in Sleman, the previous vernacular, Javanese, is not preferred anymore because nation policies and regulations do support this language to be used in offices and mass media. Javanese is not a compulsory subject at schools. Although it is still taught, it has very limited hours. While for Indonesian language the situation is very different. Indonesian language is a compulsory subject from elementary to higher education. It is also used in offices, mass media and other formal occasions. Another factor that makes people prefer Indonesian than Javanese is the different character of the languages. Javanese differentiates its linguistic systems and vocabularies based on three levels of politeness, *ngoko – krama madya – krama inggil*. This identification is a representation of Javanese culture in which person's social class identification is very important. While for Indonesian, this identification is not needed. Indonesian only differentiates between formal and informal situations. The less complicated Indonesian language is found more preferable than Javanese language.

Javanese Language

Javanese language is widely spoken in Indonesia. The Javanese speech communities reach vast geographical area. Javanese is spoken in Java, Sulawesi, Irian Jaya, Maluku and other regions. We can also find Javanese speech communities outside Indonesia, like in Singapore, Surinam, and New Caledonia. In Java, people communicate using Javanese and also other regional languages like: Maduranese and Sundanese. Javanese language is taught in elementary schools. It is not one of the compulsory subjects that the schools have. Many of the schools place the subject under the local content subjects. This means that the time allotment in the teaching of the Javanese language is very limited.

People consider Javanese as a difficult language to master. The politeness levels in the language which relate to the Javanese cultural concept to differentiate the position of one's speaking partner. Javanese people, before they speak, they should identify their speaking partner's position. This identification is needed to construct the Javanese utterances. Different situation will have different choice of vocabularies for example. If a person talks to someone of lower position or class, like a father who talks to his child, the father should use

ngoko or maybe *krama madya* and the child should use *krama inggil* to talk to the father. Here is an example of father – son conversation.

Father : *Le, wis adus durung?* (Son, have you already taken a bath?)

Son : *Sampun Pak. Menawi Bapak ngersakaken siram, mangga dipun agem mawon pasiramanipun.* (Yes, I have, Father. If you want to use the bathroom to take a bath, it's unoccupied now.)

Javanese language has been used as language of communication in Java island, mostly in the central and eastern parts of the island. Historically, Javanese as a lingua franca has survived through many centuries. The oldest inscription written entirely in Javanese found is dated March 25, 804. It was named as the 'Sukabumi inscription.' This was the Old Javanese. The Middle Javanese developed during the Majapahit Empire until the 16th century. The New Javanese has emerged since 16th century to 20th century. The recent is called the Modern Javanese. This version is the language that Javanese people speak nowadays.

Javanese language has three main levels of politeness. Geertz's review on Javanese: "it is nearly impossible to say anything without indicating the social relationships between the speaker and the listener in terms of status and familiarity" (248; Wardaugh 277). This has made Javanese difficult to master, since in each level the vocabularies are really different to one another.

Table of examples of Javanese sentences

English	Are	you	going	to eat	rice	now?
<i>Krama inggil</i>	<i>Menapa</i>	<i>pandjenengan</i>	<i>bade</i>	<i>dahar</i>	<i>sekul</i>	<i>samenika?</i>
<i>Krama madya</i>	<i>Napa</i>	<i>sampejan</i>	<i>adjeng</i>	<i>neda</i>	<i>sekul</i>	<i>saniki?</i>
<i>Ngoko</i>	<i>Apa</i>	<i>kowe</i>	<i>arep</i>	<i>mangan</i>	<i>sega</i>	<i>saiki?</i>

*) Adapted from Geertz (1960: 250) in Wardaugh (2006: 278)

Indonesian Language

Indonesian language is originated from the Classical Malay of the Malaccan royal courts spoken in northeast Sumatra. This language has served as a lingua franca for the Indonesian archipelago for centuries. When Indonesia declared its independence and needed a national language, this language was chosen in spite of its small number of speakers (in comparison to Javanese and Sundanese speakers who reached 42-48 percent and 15 percent, the Malayan speakers were only 5 percent of the population). As the official language, Indonesian language has very important role to unify the cross-archipelagic country that has more than 700 native languages and many ethnic groups. This language functions as a symbol of national identity and pride. It is also a language of communication, education, transaction, documentation, the development of national culture, science, technology and mass media in Indonesia.

Indonesian language has been influenced by other languages, including Dutch, English, Arabic, Chinese, Portuguese, Sanskrit, Tamil, Hindi and Persian.



The study on the Indonesian etymology and loan words reveals the historical and social contexts of the language. It is estimated that a big number of loan words were of Sanskrit, Dutch, Arabic, English, Chinese, Portuguese etc. In the word order, Indonesian language has the Subject-Verb-Object (SVO), similar European languages. From morphological point of view, Indonesian language can be identified as an agglutinative language since it primarily uses agglutination. Words with different morphemes will have different meanings. It has a high rate of affixes and morphemes per word and with very few irregular verbs. For example, there four types of affixes in Indonesian language: prefixes (*awalan*), suffixes (*akhiran*), circumfixes (*apitan*), and infixes (*sisipan*). These affixes can be classified into three parts of speech: the noun, verb and adjective affixes.

Here is an interesting case on the use of affixes to change the class and meaning of a word:

ajar= root word (verb) – to learn

New words from affixation:

Ajaran = teachings

Belajar = to learn, to study

diajarkan = being taught (transitive)

pelajar = student

The new meanings which are resulted from the use of affixes has changed the word class. The original word *ajar* is a verb. When the word has the –an suffix, *ajaran*, the class now changes into a noun.

Indonesian language is known as 'democratic language.' As Wardaugh explained in Tanner's research, "Indonesian...whether the official or the daily variety, is regarded as a neutral deocartic language. A speaker of Indonesian needs not commit to himself to particular social identity, nor needs he imputes one to those with him he converses." (102)

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The participants in this research are of ten families. They live in Minamartani village in Sleman regency. The time for data collection was in 2021. The families are selected based on the following criteria: 1) both parents are from Javanese ethnic; 2) both parents speak Javanese as their mother-tongues; and 3) family have child(ren) under 18 years old. The first data were collected using observation method. The writer witnessed the conversation between the parent and the child(ren) at home domain. For the second data, the writer did the semi-structured interview to get information on parent's proficiency and perception of both languages.

The participants, based on the number of children, can be classified into the family of one child consists of one family (1 family: 10%), the families of two children consist of six families (6 families: 60%) and the families of three and more children consists of three families (3 families: 30%). Based on the

education background of the parents, both the families with parents of senior high school background consist of three families (3 families: 30%); the families with parents of S1 graduate and senior high school background consist of three families (3 families: 30%); and the families with parents of S1 graduate or postgraduate background consist of four families (4 families: 40%). All of the families live in a rural area in Sleman.

Based on the employment of the parents, the findings are: the families with parents working as manual workers consist of four families (4 families: 40%); the family with parents having their own businesses consists of one family (1 family: 10%) and the families with parents working in academic institutions consist of five families (5 families: 50%).

Based on the observation, there were four families who communicate in low level Javanese (4 families: 40%). Next, the number of family who communicate in Indonesian is four families (4 families: 40%). Then, the family who communicate in Indonesian and low level Javanese consists of one family (1 family: 10%). Last, the family who communicate in Indonesian and high level Javanese consists of one family (1 family: 10%). If we relate the language used and the educational background, here is the result. The parents who communicate using the low level Javanese are those of senior high school backgrounds come from three families (3 families: 30%) and one family of S1 graduate and senior high school background (1 family: 10%). The parents who use Indonesian in their communication have S1 degree and diploma degree consist of one family (1 family: 10%) and parents who have S1/S2 degree and senior high school background consist of three families (3 families: 30%). While for those who use Indonesian and low level of Javanese have background of S1 and senior high school background consists of one family (1 family: 10%). The last, for the family who communicate using Indonesians and high level of Javanese, having S1 degree and S2 degree backgrounds consists of one family (1 family: 10%).

Based on language and the employment background, the four families who communicate using the low level Javanese are those who work as manual workers (4 families: 40%). Then the family who use Indonesian and low level of Javanese is the family who work in an institution (1 family: 10%). The last finding, there is one family who communicate using Indonesian and high level of Javanese, the parents work in the office/institution (1 family: 10%). While for those who use Indonesian and have worked in offices/institutions consist of three families (3 families: 30%) and the family who use Indonesian and owning a business consists of one family (1 family: 10%).

Based on the language perception of the parents, it can be reported that the parents who prefer Javanese language come from five families (5 families: 50%) and the parents who prefer Indonesian come from five families (5 families: 50%). For the parents who prefer Javanese language, they explained that they

have learned the high value of Javanese language from their parents too. They are proud of being Javanese. They want to pass on their mastery of Javanese language but some situations have made it a difficult task to perform, like the massive exposure of Indonesian language and the least exposure of Javanese language. The massive exposure of Indonesian, for example is the formal use of Indonesian at schools, from pre-schools to universities. There are also the Indonesian uses in books, magazines, newspaper, television, radio, websites and many others. For the parents who prefer Indonesian, they share their likeness of Indonesian language for being simpler and practical. They do not need to think of the appropriate politeness level to adjust with the class position of their speaking partner or context of place or others. Some also share that the Indonesian is the language which is more prestigious related to its speakers. The educated and wealthier people mostly speak Indonesian. For the families who communicate using Indonesian and low level Javanese, the parents explained that they actually communicate using Indonesian but when the children socialize with other children from schools and neighborhood, the children tend to communicate using low level Javanese. Another family who communicate using Indonesian and high level Javanese told that the father had been taught by the grandparents to use high level Javanese, so he wants to do the same thing. Unfortunately, the mother use Indonesian since she feels more ease to use Indonesian and that she only masters the low level Javanese.

The result shows that the language use in parent-children's conversation in terms of bilingualism is not equal. The tendency is more on the Indonesian language (60%) rather than Javanese language (40%). This can be read that the bilingualism situation is promising a good future for the Indonesian language but a bad future for the Javanese language. The declining mastery on Javanese, only the *ngoko* level is mastered, should be anticipated before things get worse. This indicates the early process of a language shift, from Javanese to Indonesian. The worst is it can end up in the death of Javanese language. If we want Javanese language to survive, then an effort should be done.

CONCLUSION

From the discussion above, it can be concluded that the language used in the conversation between parents and children in bilingual community in Sleman between Indonesian and Javanese the family who use Javanese language (40%) come from the family with senior high school and those who work as manual workers. As for Indonesian language, the families who use it come from higher educational background (60%). The parents for the families who use Indonesian mostly work for offices/institutions. For the reasons of using the language, some families who use Indonesian explain that they like the neutral character, no need to identify the status and the familiarity. For parents, Indonesian which is more neutral than Javanese in accommodating the social cultural meaning is more easily taught. For the children, it is more easily spoken and understood.

There is a tendency that Indonesian is more preferred than Javanese. There will be more speakers for Indonesian language. This means a good future for Indonesian language but a bad future for Javanese language. There should be an effort done if we want to change this situation.

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