CHANGE AND PRESERVATION IN LANGUAGE AND CULTURE IN ASIA

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Language Attitude and Language Choice among Students in Yogyakarta

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Introduction

Living in Yogyakarta, a multicultural city in Indonesia, enables people to meet and communicate with those whose different language and cultural backgrounds. Moreover, the existence of Yogyakarta as an international tourist destination, provides more opportunity for the society to mingle with others from different countries. This situation influences the use of the language. It is necessary to choose the most appropriate language to use. In general, people use Javanese language (one of the local languages in Indonesia) to communicate with those who are Javanese and Indonesian to communicate with those from different regions in Indonesia and English when they communicate with foreigners. Nowadays, there is a tendency that the use of Indonesian and English is getting more intense, while the use of Javanese or other local language is fading.

This phenomenon attracts the attention of the writers of this paper to conduct a research related to the ethnolinguistic vitality of the languages spoken by people in Yogyakarta i.e. local languages, Indonesian, and English. Holmes stated there are three components that influence the ethnolinguistic vitality of a language: the status of the language which is indicated by the attitude of the people toward the language, the size of the group who uses the language and their distribution, and the institutional support (Holmes, 2013, p. 66). This paper is intended to explore the possible language shift which occurs in Yogyakarta by investigating the language attitude and language choice among students in Yogyakarta.

Language attitude and language choice are closely related as explained by Holmes.

> *"People generally do not hold opinions about languages in a vacuum. They develop attitudes towards languages which indicate their views about those who speak the languages, and the contexts and functions with which they are associated. When people listen to accents or languages they have never heard before, their assessments are totally random. There is no pattern to them. In other words, there is no universal consensus about which languages sound most beautiful and which most ugly, despite people's beliefs that some languages are just inherently more beautiful than others"* (Holmes, 2013, p. 401).

Furthermore, he states that there are some factors that may influence the language attitude of a speaker.

> *"Attitudes to language are strongly influenced by social and political factors, as was evident in the discussion in many earlier chapters. Language varieties have indexing properties which all members of the community are aware of. Language planners must take account of attitudes when they select a suitable language for development as an official or national language"* (Holmes, 2013, p. 410).

Language attitude may also be determined based on how the community identifies and labels the language. When they have positive attitudes towards the language, they will select the language in most interactions. Meanwhile, they may be resistant in using the language when they have negative attitudes (Dweik & Qawar, 2015, p. 6).

In terms of the language choice, Sumarsono argues that the language choice of a speaker can be influenced by some factors such as participants, settings, and topics (Sumarsono, 2013, pp. 199-200). Another researcher, Meyerhoff, highlights the relation between language choice and ethnolinguistic vitality. He said, in multilingual communities, different languages may have different vitality in different domains, and that the choice of the language may affect interactional force and may imply something about the situations or the speakers (Meyerhoff, 2006, p. 103).

Methodology

This research was a descriptive quantitative research which was designed to answer the following research questions: (1) what the language attitude of the students towards the local language, Indonesian, and English is; and (2) what language choice selected by the students when they communicate in a particular domain. To obtain the data, a questionnaire was designed. This questionnaire includes closed questions related to the respondents' cultural background, language attitude, and language choice in particular domains. The respondents' direct self-reports based on their metalinguistic ability were applied. This is in line with what Milroy and Gordon said. "They are fundamentally metalinguistic tasks in that they rely on the respondents' ability to consider their own linguistic behaviour" (Milroy & Gordon, 2003, p. 54). The respondents of this research are 100 randomly selected students of Universitas Sanata Dharma. Those students study in various departments and have different language, ethnicity, and cultural backgrounds.

Results

The results of this research are as follows.

Table 1: Demographic Distribution of the Survey

		Frequency (N = 100)
Gender	Male	27
	Female	73
Regions	Bali	7
	Banten	7
	DKI Jakarta	3
	DI Yogyakarta	22
	Jawa Barat	5
	Jawa Tengah	21
	Jawa Timur	4
	Kalimantan	12
	Maluku	1
	Nusa Tenggara Timur	7
	Papua	3
	Riau	`

	Sulawesi	4
	Sumatera	3
Mother tongue	Local Language	30
	Indonesian	70
	English	0
Local language mastery	Yes	97
	No	3
Ethnicity background	Mono-ethnic	73
	Multi-ethnic	27

Language background of the parents	Monolingual (the mother and the father have the mother tongue)	Local Language	52
		Indonesian	27
	Multilingual (the parents have different mother tongue)		21
Where to live in Yogyakarta	Boarding house with friends from different regions		67
	Boarding house with friends from the same region		3
	Living with parents		22
	Living with relatives		7

Table 2: Language Attitude

No	Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	Indonesian is very important for my life because it supports my study	0	1	21	88
2	Indonesian is very important for my life because it is necessary for my daily communication	0	2	25	73
3	Indonesian is very important for my life because I need it to reach my dream	0	8	30	62
4	Indonesian is very important because it is needed for international communication	6	28	40	26
5	Indonesian is very important because it can increase my prestige	17	41	32	10
6	English is very important for my life because it supports my study	0	4	37	59
7	English is very important for my life because it is necessary for my daily communication	3	22	44	21
8	English is very important for my life because I need it to reach my dream	1	5	31	63
9	English is very important because it is needed for international communication	0	3	17	80

10	English is very important because it can increase my prestige	16	31	35	18
11	Local language is very important for my life because it supports my study	8	47	32	13
12	Local language is very important for my life because it is necessary for my daily communication	3	21	47	29
13	Local language is very important for my life because I need it to reach my dream	7	53	30	10
14	Local language is very important because it can increase my prestige	15	50	27	8
15	Indonesian, as the national language, should be prioritized	0	4	28	68
16	English, as an international language, should be learned	0	5	23	73
17	Local languages should be preserved by using it in daily conversations	0	4	14	82

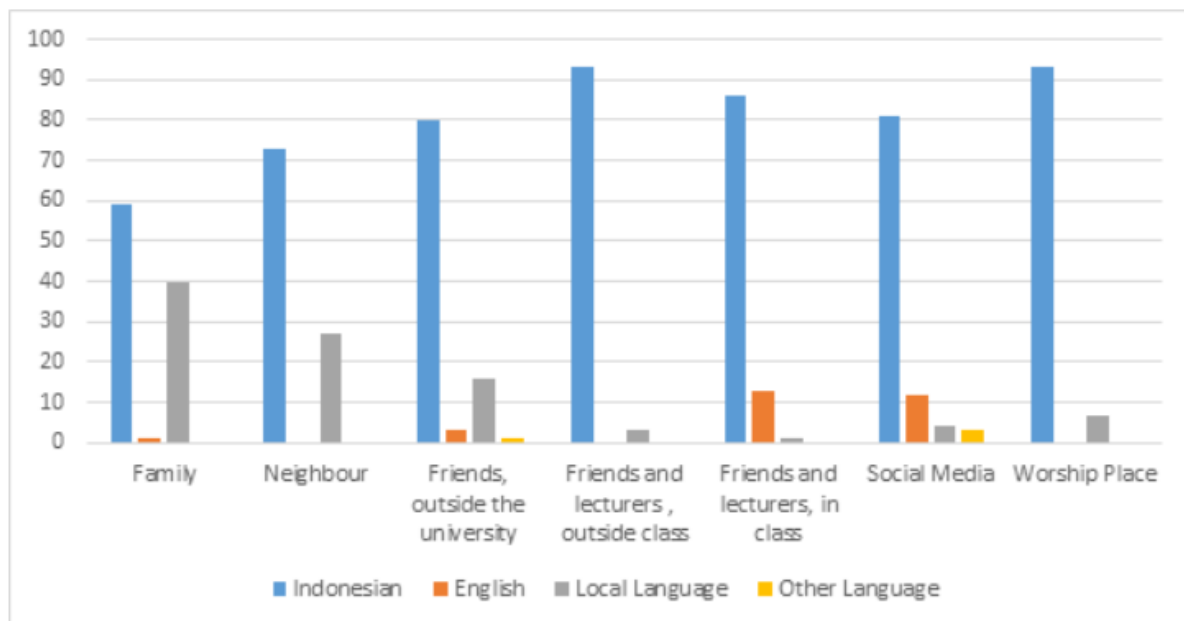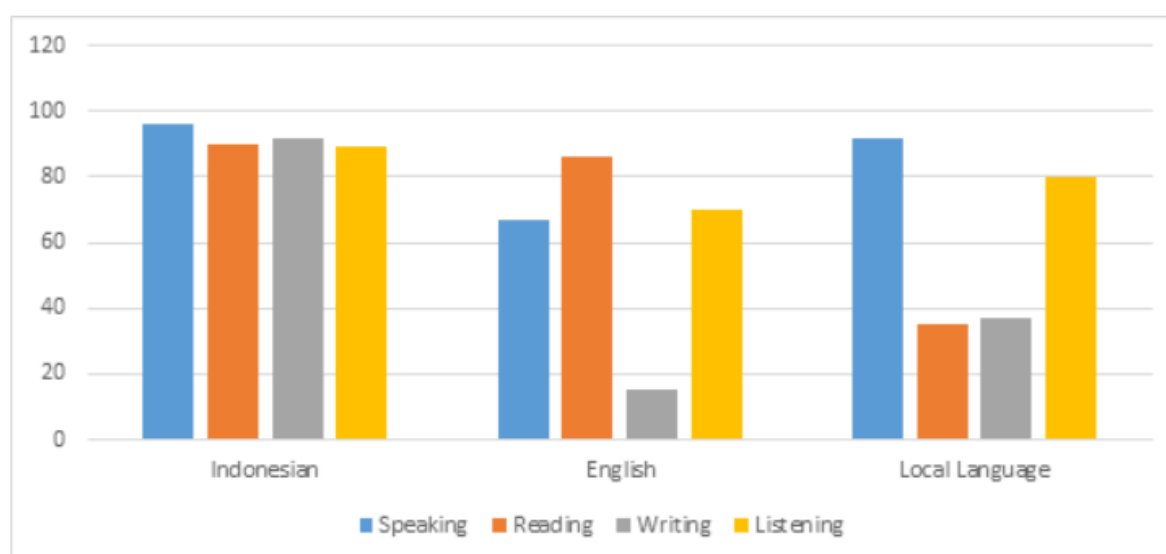Chart 1: Language Choice in Particular Domains

Chart 2: Language Use Based on the Functions

Discussion

The first part of the questionnaire deals with the identification of the demographic factors that may influence the language attitude and language choice of the students. The results show that the respondents come from different regions in Indonesia. It can be seen that the respondents acquire different mother tongues. The dominant one is Indonesian (70%). This fact is interesting since when it is compared to the mother tongues of their parents, the number of the students whose parents' mother tongue is Indonesian is only 27%. It implies that more families chose to introduce Indonesian as the first language to their children although the parents speak in local languages and come from the same ethnic groups. It happens because they think that by acquiring Indonesian their children may have more opportunities related their future education and jobs and that they may have easier life since Indonesia is the most frequent language spoken by the society.

In Indonesia, the language policy is regulated under the Law of 2009 which enforces the use of Indonesian as the official national language used in state official documents, education institutions, international and national forums, working environments, company reports, names, and mass media. Therefore, it is very reasonable that Indonesian language gains more vitality since it is used almost in all matters in Indonesia. This is in line with Milroy's statement that "all standard languages have to be given some form of legitimacy, and have to be maintained and protected through authority and doctrine of correctness" (Milroy J. , 2007, p. 138). Moreover, Benedict Anderson, as cited by Gal (Gal, 2007, p. 152), explains that centralized education, general conscription, press capitalism, and national labour markets influenced the creation of standard languages that may lead to homogeneity across national territory. This opinion is true regarding the fact that 70% of the respondents use Indonesian as their mother tongue.

The second part of the questionnaire shows that the students have positive language attitudes towards Indonesian, English, and local languages though there are some points we need to highlight. The first point is related the importance of Indonesian, English, and local languages toward their daily life, education, and future life. The students consider Indonesian and local languages important for their daily communication, but Indonesian gains more

positive language attitude. The local languages are not really considered important to support the respondents' study and future life, and the mastery of the local languages will not influence their prestige. The language that the students think can increase their prestige is English. Milroy (Milroy, 2007, p. 137) stated that "speakers tend to confer prestige on usages that are considered to be those of higher social classes". In Indonesia, those who can speak in English are regarded more educated than those who cannot.

In terms of preserving the local languages, 96% of the students think it is necessary to preserve local languages by using the language in daily communication. This attitude is also reflected in the fact that 97% of the students also master the local languages spoken in their hometown. This positive attitude is a good sign to preserve local languages in Indonesia since the results of this research show a tendency that parents do not pass their first language to their children. This situation endangers the existence of local languages since the society has started to shift the language to Indonesian. Charts 2 and 3 show that Indonesian is dominant in all domains and functions. English is mostly used in class and social media, whereas local languages are used to communicate with their family, neighbours, and friends. It is in accordance with their language attitude and also their language proficiency.

Conclusion

It can be concluded that the students have positive language attitudes towards Indonesian, English, and local languages because they are needed for their study, daily life, international communication, and future life. Indonesian in more dominant in the language choice since it is the national language and *lingua franca* in Indonesia. This dominance endangers the existence of local languages. This study needs further elaboration since it only applied the direct approach and observed only the students in one university. Further research might be conducted by applying the match-guise technique and observing more respondents.

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