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PROSIDING INTERNASIONAL

Judul Artikel   : Student Mobility and Heritage Language Preservation

Penulis Artikel   : Anna Fitriati

Identitas Prosiding

a) Nama Prosiding   : English Language & Literature International Conference

b) ISSN/ISBN   : p-ISSN: 2579-7549, e-ISSN: 2579-7263

c) Jumlah Halaman   : 230 - 238

d) Penerbit   :

e) URL Asli   : Student Mobility and Heritage Language Preservation | Fitriati | English Language and Literature International Conference (ELLiC) Proceedings (unimus.ac.id)

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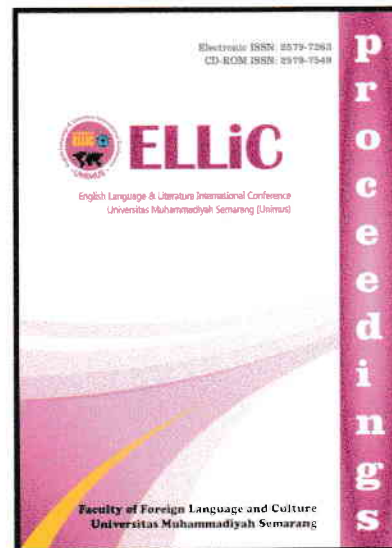
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Student Mobility and Heritage Language Preservation

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ABSTRACT

Yogyakarta, known as the educational city, has attracted students from different regions to move to Yogyakarta and continue their studies there. This mobility allows the students to interact with others whose different languages and cultural backgrounds. The interaction may positively or negatively impact their heritage language preservation. Being exposed to different languages and cultures may foster multilingualism and cultural diversity. On the other hand, it may also result in lost heritage languages, especially when students switch from using their heritage language to using Indonesian when communicating with others. Losing a language is something that we do not expect. Thus, research on this topic is necessary to identify the challenges of heritage language preservation. This paper examines students' attitudes toward their heritage languages: whether they have positive or negative attitudes toward heritage language preservation. A small-scale analysis is conducted on students at Universitas Sanata Dharma. The methods applied in gathering the data are distributing a questionnaire and completing a structured interview with some selected students. The findings show that the respondents have a positive attitude toward the heritage language, and their mobility influences heritage language preservation because it leads to less exposure toward the language.

Keywords: mobility, attitude, multilingualism, heritage, preservation

INTRODUCTION

Capstick (2021) says that the general meaning of mobility includes the movement of many other resources and objects beyond human agents, such as the circulation of capital, products, information, and knowledge. Mobility can also be specified as human mobility, which is the geographical

movement of individuals or communities who cross the boundaries of a political or administrative unit for a certain minimum period. Human mobility can be differentiated into international migration between more than one nation-state and internal migration, which refers to movement from one province or district to another within the same country.

Crossing linguistic, cultural, and geographical borders has been part of human's everyday lives since Homo erectus traveled to South-East Asia a million years ago. There are some factors influencing people to migrate. Finding better conditions or opportunities, such as jobs, higher wages, safety or freedom of expression, has been assumed to be reasonable factors of human migration (de Haas, 2014). In line with de Haas' statement, Capstick adds that individuals and families move to seek new opportunities as well as educational and economic prospects (Capstick, 2021). Those considering migration rationally examine many locations and select one that maximize the profits of the migration (Marta *et* al., 2020)

Yogyakarta is known as an educational city in which many well-known universities are located. This fact becomes a magnet for people from various regions to move to Yogyakarta to pursue a better education. As stated by the Statistic Indonesia of the Special Region of Yogyakarta, more than two hundred thousand students study in universities in Yogyakarta (https://yogyakarta.bps.go.id/)

The mobility of students from various regions contributes to the increase of immigrants in Yogyakarta. Kamil stated that Yogyakarta's growing number of immigrants gave birth to a multicultural city that demands citizens accept differences and live harmoniously (Kamil, 2018).

Living in a multicultural city provides a chance for the students residing in Yogyakarta to interact with others whose different cultural, religious, and linguistic backgrounds. This opportunity may positively or negatively impact the students' linguistic repertoire. Exposure to different languages and cultures may foster multilingualism and appreciation of cultural diversity.

On the other hand, when students assimilate and acculturate by communicating in Indonesian rather than in their heritage language or mother tongue, it may also lead to monolingualism. As a result, their heritage language use is becoming less frequent and may lead to language loss because a language becomes extinct when no one speaks it anymore.

Simon (2019) argues that the percentage of doomed or extinct indigenous languages worldwide is increasing. Picture 1 describes the visualization of the global spread of language loss. Each color indicates the percentage of the language lost in each country. The deep green color represents countries with no language loss. We can see that the language loss spread from decade to decade as the green color is in the minority in 2018. It means that significant language loss has begun to dominate Simon (2019, p.8).

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Picture 1
Percentage of doomed or extinct indigenous languages
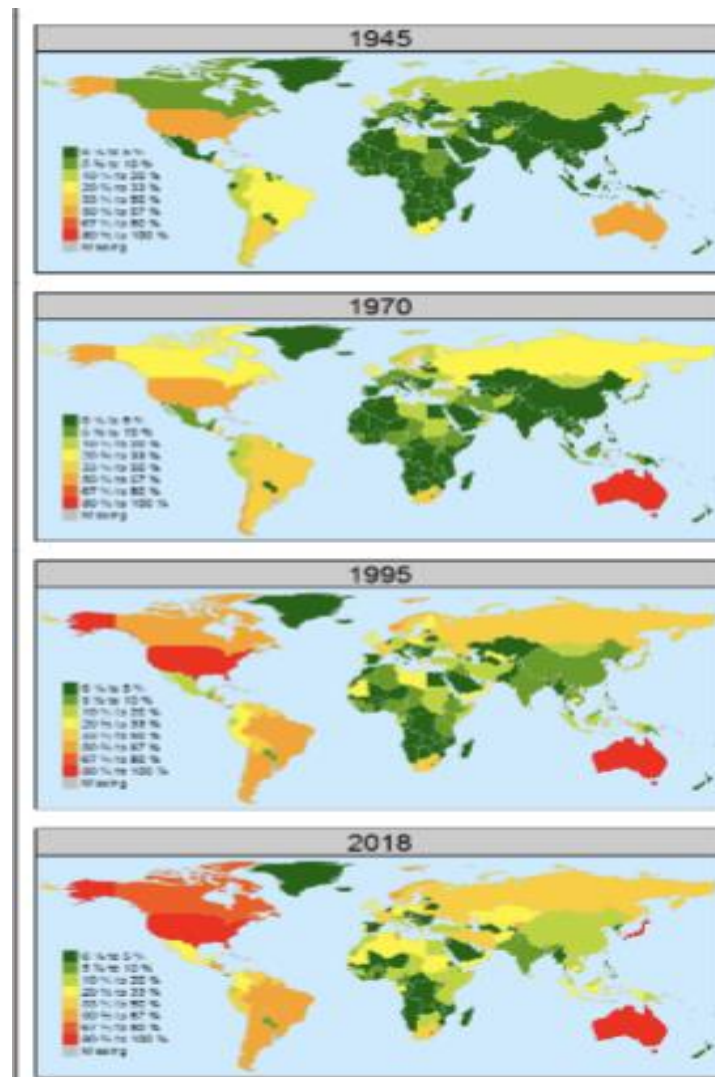
The above picture also shows that language loss also occurs in Indonesia although the percentage is not high. There might be some factors contributing to this situation. Among others are: the domination of Indonesian as the official language, the less frequent usage of heritage or indigenous languages, and the implementation of language policies that do not support the preservation of indigenous languages. Concerning this, studies on language endangerment and preservation are necessary to formulate strategic actions or policies to preserve indigenous languages.

This paper aims to identify the relationship between student mobility and heritage language preservation. This paper (1) examines students' attitudes toward their heritage languages: whether they have positive or negative attitudes toward heritage language preservation, (2) identifies the influence of student mobility on the use of their heritage

language, and (3) identifies the challenges faced by the students in preserving their heritage language.

Some researchers have done studies related to mobility and language. Abbasi *et* al. (2022) studied the language use and ethnic identity of young migrant Kashmiri speakers in Karachi, Pakistan. They applied a qualitative case study by interviewing some selected participants. The result shows that the young Kashmiris use Urdu language in different domains because of upward social mobility and lingua franca; while the Kashmiri language has been restricted and is only used for fun and interaction with relatives. In addition, they found that although the language patterns showed a shift, the young Kashmiri are still proud of their Kashmiri language.

Another researcher, Alfian, analyzes students' language attitude in maintaining heritage language. Alfian used a questionnaire and a semi-structured interview to collect the data. It is found out that the students have positive language attitudes towards languages and maintain heritage language well by actively preserving local languages in their respective environments (Alfian, 2021).

The present study is different from the research done by Abbasi et al. and Alfian in terms of the object and the focus of the study. The current study focuses on the relationship between student mobility and heritage language preservation. The objects of the study are students who move to Yogyakarta to pursue higher education. Meanwhile, it is similar to previous studies regarding the method used to collect and analyze the data.

METHOD

This research applied both the quantitative and qualitative methods. Coghland and Brydin-Miller explain that a quantitative method can be used to observe phenomena or occurrences affecting individuals. The collection of quantitative information allows the researcher to conduct statistical analyses that aggregate data, show relationships among the data or compare across aggregate data. The instruments that can be used to collect quantitative data can be in the form of questionnaires, structured observations, or experiments (Coghland and Brydin-Miller, 2014). Considering Coghland and Brydin-Miller theory, a questionnaire was distributed to 15 respondents who are students of Sanata Dharma University.

This questionnaire was organized into three parts. The first part aimed to identify the respondents' linguistic background and ethnicity. The second was used to identify the language attitude toward heritage their language. In this part, Linkert scales were used. Every question was given a score with a range from one to four. One meant strongly disagree and four meant strongly agree. In contrast, the last part consisted of language choice and use questions.

The qualitative method was implemented to gather more detailed information. The qualitative data were collected through a semi-structured interview. During this interview the researcher gathered more information about students' language attitudes, language use, and opinion on heritage language preservation.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The first part of the questionnaire shows that the respondents have different linguistic backgrounds. The following table describes the demographic distribution of the respondent.

Table 1:
The demographic distribution of the respondent

Ethnicity background	Mono-ethnic	5
	Multi-ethnic	10
Mother tongue	Indonesian	12
	The local language spoken by the society in the region they live	1
	The heritage language of their family	2
Mother tongue of the mother	Indonesian	2
	The local language spoken by the society in the region they live	1
	The heritage language of their family	12
Mother tongue of the mother	Indonesian	3
	The local language spoken by the society in the region they live	1
	The heritage language of their family	11
Language background of the parent	Mono-lingual (both parents acquire the same mother tongue)	7
	Multi-lingual (both parents acquire different mother tongues	8
Mastery of the heritage language of the mother's ancestor	yes	8
	no	7
Mastery of the heritage language of the father's ancestor	yes	9
	no	6
Where to live in Yogyakarta	Boarding house with friends from different regions	12
	Live together with parents	1
	Live together with relatives	2

The data related to the respondents' mother tongues show that the respondents acquired different mother tongue. The most dominant one is Indonesian. This fact is interesting since most of the parents acquire the heritage language of their ancestors as their mother tongue. The main

reason why the most respondents did not acquire the heritage language of their parents as their mother tongue is the fact that the heritage language of the family is not used by the society in the region where they live. Another reason is that the parents do not master their heritage language anymore, so they cannot introduce that language to their children. There is a tendency that although the respondents come from multicultural families, the parents choose to teach Indonesian as their children's first language.

The findings of the second part of the questionnaire are described in the following table.

Table 2:
The Language Attitude

| Statement	1	2	3	4	Average
The heritage language of my ancestors is very important in my life because it is needed in daily communication.	2	4	7	2	2.6
The heritage language of my ancestors is very important in my life because I need it to fulfill my dreams.	8	5	2	0	1.6
The heritage language of my ancestors is very important in my life because it is necessary for international communication.	3	6	4	2	2.3
The heritage language of my ancestors is essential to my life because it adds to my prestige.	9	3	1	2	1.7
I have to prioritize the heritage language of my ancestors.	2	9	2	2	2.3
I must master the heritage language of my ancestors.	1	1	6	7	3.3
Using my heritage language in communication relieves my longing for families who do not live together in Yogyakarta.	2	5	5	3	2.6
Using my heritage language while living in Yogyakarta made me feel ashamed/inferior.	12	2	0	1	1.3
The younger generation plays a significant role in preserving the heritage language.	0	2	3	10	3.5

The first four questions identify the importance of heritage language in the respondents' lives. The respondents consider the heritage language important for their daily communication, but the heritage language is not significant for their international communication, dreams, and prestige. The

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heritage language does not elevate their prestige because high-class people do not speak it. This is in line with what is stated by Milroy that speakers tend to confer prestige on usages that are considered to be those of higher social classes (Milroy, 2007, p.137). On the other hand, they agree that using their heritage language to communicate with others does not make them feel ashamed or inferior. The respondents stated that the ability to communicate using their heritage language identifies them as part of their ethnicity and it shows their social identity.

The respondents also agree that heritage language should be prioritized and mastered to preserve the language. They realize the importance of language preservation in society and their significant role in preserving heritage languages. This awareness encourages the respondents to start learning and using their heritage language.

In terms of heritage language use, it can be seen that heritage language use is minimal. Graphic 1 illustrates that the heritage language is used when communicating with other family members. The use of heritage language is less frequent than the local language. It can also be seen that Indonesian is very dominant.

Graphic 1:
Language use in communication
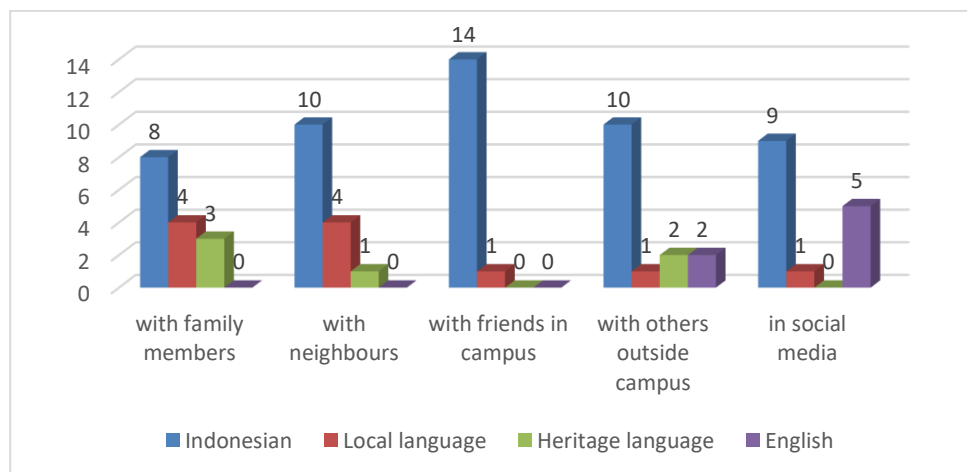
Furthermore, 67 % of the respondents state that they barely use their heritage language to communicate while living in Yogyakarta. The respondents only use their heritage language when speaking with their families and friends of the same ethnicity. The factors that influence this situation are: the heritage language proficiency of the respondents is not good, the concern that the use of heritage language may result in misunderstanding, and no friend also speaks the same heritage language.

Regarding heritage language preservation, all respondents agree that they should actively participate in preserving and protecting heritage languages. They have done some actions to help them keep their heritage language, such as: learning their heritage language by listening to songs,

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consulting their parents, and taking a course on that language, using the heritage language more frequently when they communicate with others of the same ethnicity, introducing their heritage language to their friends of different ethnicity.

Based on the findings above, it can be seen that the respondents have a positive language attitude toward their heritage language although the usage of this language is less frequent than Indonesian. The mobility of the respondent reduces their exposure to the heritage language because they cannot find other people who also speak the same language. This situation is the biggest challenge for the respondents in using the heritage language while living in Yogyakarta.

CONCLUSION

It can be concluded that the respondents value heritage language positively because heritage language mastery indicates their social identity as a member of a particular ethnicity. Regarding the influence of student mobility to heritage language preservation, it is found that the mobility impacts the use of the heritage language. In Yogyakarta, the heritage language is not frequently used because the respondents do not find many friends or colleagues who can understand their language. This situation stimulates them to use Indonesian rather than their heritage language. The dominant use of Indonesian may lead to the endangerment of minority languages. Through this research, the writer would like to recommend the use of heritage languages or local languages so that we can preserve those languages.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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The term "heritage language" is used to identify languages other than the dominant language (or languages) in a given social context.

What is a heritage language? Ann Kelleher, University of California, Davis - https://www.cal.org/heritage/pdfs/briefs/What-is-a-Heritage-Language.pdf
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