

Between Local Languages, Indonesian, and English: What Language Do EFL students in Indonesia Really Use Daily?

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ABSTRACT. Growing up in multilingual settings, Indonesian EFL learners are blessed with their linguistic richness. However, being multilingual foreign language learners sometimes entails having limited time of using the target language. This paper portrays daily language use by Indonesian EFL students. Research data are collected through a survey addressed to EFL students ($n = 105$) of three different universities in Indonesia. The results of statistical data analysis reveal that apart from the fact the majority of respondents are of Sundanese ethnicity and that they are majoring in English, Indonesian is reported to be the most prolifically used language. This may imply that the dominance of Indonesian over local languages and English is facilitated by a language policy that makes Indonesian as the only official language in the archipelagic country.

Keywords: multilingualism, multilingual EFL students, language use, language survey.

1. INTRODUCTION

Indonesia is linguistically rich on the one hand and complex on the other hand. The existence of 700+ local languages besides the Indonesian language has 'rainbowed' a multilingual situation in Indonesia. For some Indonesians, the language they use for social intercourse may differ from the one they use at home. These people speak one of the local languages at home and speak Indonesian for their social intercourse. At the same time, an ever-increasing number of people are starting to use Indonesian as a sole everyday language, including as a home language (Sneddon, 2006).

Amid the multilingual settings, Indonesian people are also fully aware that they belong to the global community and that foreign languages are indispensably essential in global competition and cooperation. More and more Indonesians learn foreign languages, especially English, in and outside the schools. English, as a language used by more than half of the world's population, is the most learned foreign language in Indonesia. It is taught as a compulsory foreign language subject in junior high schools (grades 7-9) and senior high schools (grades 10-12). The stance of English as a required foreign language subject is recognized in several official regulations. In primary schools; however, English is not mentioned as a subject (the Regulation of Minister of Education and Culture of the Republic of Indonesia No. 57, 58, 59, and 60 of 2014), but encouraged to be taught as one of the local content

subjects (the Regulation of Minister of National Education of the Republic of Indonesia No. 22 of 2006). Even so, Kasihani (2000) reported that 61.6% of junior high school students had been learning English since primary school.

Exposure to English is amplified by the invasion of Western movies and music. Indonesians are increasingly getting used to watching televisions, movies, and listening to music in English. What is more, easier Internet access also means more exposure to English. Indonesians are among the world's most prolific Internet users. The number is estimated to reach 132,700,000 or the third highest in Asia after China and India as of March 31, 2017. In light of that English is the most dominantly used language on the Internet (Miniwatts Marketing Group, 2019), Indonesians are substantially exposed to English.

The boundary between the L1 and the L2 is vague in the context of this study. It is hard to say that their local language is the L1 and that Indonesian is the L2 because some respondents use Indonesian as their language of home along with their local language. The fact that their knowledge of the Indonesian language is identical to that of their home language is in contradiction with the characteristics of L2 users (Cook, 2002). In all likelihood, the respondents are native bilinguals or, to borrow Toribio's (2001) term, balanced bilinguals.

2. MODELS

The present study was aimed at describing the use of languages by Indonesian EFL learners. To this end, a survey was conducted in West Java, Indonesia. In the context of this study, the respondents speak one of the local languages, Indonesian (official language), and English (target foreign language). Elaborately, this study attempted to answer the following research questions:

- Among local languages, Indonesian, and English, what is the most dominantly used language by the EFL students?
- When do they use their local language, Indonesian, and English?

The survey was addressed to EFL students in three different universities in Indonesia in 2016. The

total number of respondents in these three universities combined was 941, but only 105 returned the questionnaire. These respondents were in the age range of 18 to 27, and the majority of them were of Sundanese ethnicity, but they included Javanese, Malay, Batak, Karonese, Manggaraian, and Sasak. The local languages then included Sundanese, Javanese, Malay, Toba Batak, Karo, the Manggarai language, and the Sasak language. Although these respondents started learning English as early as in primary school, they could be said to have earlier been exposed to their local language and Indonesian.

The information about language use was collected through a questionnaire. Table 1 outlines the statements the respondents were asked to answer:

TABLE 1. Questionnaire Items

1. I read newspapers, magazines, & books in	(a)	local language
2. I watch TV in	(b)	Indonesian
3. I listen to music in	(c)	English
4. I use social networking media in	(d)	local language and Indonesian
5. I speak with family in	(e)	local language and English
6. I speak with friends in	(f)	Indonesian and English
	(g)	local language, Indonesian, and English
	(h)	others
7. In a week, I use my local language	(a)	less than 10 hours
8. In a week, I use Indonesian	(b)	10-15 hours
9. In a week, I use English	(c)	15-30 hours
	(d)	more than 30 hours

In the first six questions, each language use received one point, and in the last three questions, each language use received one to four points, depending on the response, (a) to (d), respectively. For example, Respondent X marked (b) in Questions 1 and 2, (f) in Questions 3 and 4, (d) in Questions 5 and 6, (c) in Question 7, and (a) in Questions 8 and 9; her language score was then five for local language (1+1+3), seven for Indonesian (1+1+1+1+1+1) and three for English (1+1+1). Note that the term 'language use' in the context of this study refers to both receptive and productive

use.

Numerical Experiment

The results of the statistical calculation of survey data show that Indonesian is the most dominantly used language by the respondents. This result makes perfect sense as the Indonesian language, as Hamied (2012) suggests, enjoys the status as the state-unifying language and the official language of instruction in all educational settings. Table 2 presents a summary of the language use score.

TABLE 2. Summary Of Language Use Score

Language Use Score of 105 EFL Students in Indonesia			
	Local Language	Indonesian	English
Total Score	588	790	563
Mean	5.6	7.52	5.36
Minimum	1	2	2

To find out the most dominantly used language, the score of each language use was then compared. The

result is presented in Table 3.

TABLE 3. Comparison Of Language Use Score

Kruskal-Wallis Test				
Language Use	n	Median	Average Rank	Z
Local language	105	6	133.5	-3.38
Indonesian	105	8	217.9	8.25
English	105	5	122.6	-4.87
Overall	315		158	
$H = 68.8$	$df = 2$	$\alpha 0.05$	$P = 0.00000000000000115$	
Decision	Significantly different			

Table 3 shows that there is a significant difference between the use of local languages, Indonesian, and English. As Indonesian received the highest score in language use, it can be concluded that Indonesian is the most dominantly used language by the respondents.

Indonesian was reported to be prolifically used by

the respondents when reading, watching TV, listening to music, using social networking media, speaking with friends, and even at home when speaking with family. The distribution of language use is presented in Table 4

TABLE 4. Summary Of Language Use

No	Activities	Language Use and Number of Respondents							
		local language only	Indonesian only	English only	local language & Indonesian	local language & English	Indonesian & English	local language, Indonesian, & English	others
1	Reading	1%	28.6%	1%	7.5%	-	52.4%	9.5%	-
2	Watching TV	1,9%	39.4%	-	-	-	48.1%	8.7%	1.9%
3	Listening to music	-	1%	18.1%	1%	-	57%	20%	2.9%
4	Using social media	-	16.2%	29.5%	1.9%	-	38.1%	14.3%	-
5	Speaking with family	45.7%	6.7%	-	42.9%	1.8%	-	2.9%	-
6	Speaking with friends	5.7%	1.9%	-	29.5%	4.8%	4.8%	53.3%	-

Table 4 shows that 52.4% of respondents read newspapers, magazines, and books in Indonesian

along with English, 28.6% in Indonesian only, 7.5% in their local language along with Indonesian, 9.5% in their local language, Indonesian, and English, 1%

in their local language only, and 1% in English only. Thus, calculating the distribution, Indonesian is used by 98% of respondents, English by 62.9%, and only 18% reported to use local languages when reading.

It was also reported that 39.4% of the respondents use Indonesian as the sole language when watching TV, 48.1% of them use it along with English, and 8.7% use local languages, Indonesian, and English. In addition, 1.9% of the respondents use Indonesian along with English, Japanese, and Korean. Put it another way, Indonesian is used by 98.1% of respondents to watch TV. Although, there are as many as 56.8% of the respondents who reported to use English, no one of them uses it as a sole language to watch TV. The fact that only 10.6% of the respondents who reported to watch TV in their local language may reflect the lack of Indonesian TV programs presented in local languages, or perhaps such programs are not very well-exposed.

Survey data indicate that the respondents prefer English music to Indonesian. The total number of respondents who reported to listen to the music in English reaches 98%, including 18.1% of them listen in English only, 57% in English along with Indonesian, 20% in their local language, Indonesian, and English, 2.9% in English along with Indonesian, Japanese, and Korean. This outnumbers those who reported listening to music in Indonesian and local languages. The total number of respondents who listen to music in Indonesian is 81.9%. This is still a big number if compared to the number of those who listen to music in local languages; i.e., 21%. This may be because the respondents at their age do not really listen to music in their local language, or perhaps such music per se has not been performing really well in the market.

Indonesians are among the most prolific social networking media users. The number of Facebook users; for example, is estimated to reach 130,000,000 people as of December 31, 2018, or the

second- highest in Asia after India (Miniwatts Marketing Group, 2019). It is then always interesting to see in what language they use social networking media. English is the most dominantly used by the respondents. The total number of respondents who reported to use social networking media in English reaches 81.9% (38.1%+29.5%+14.3%). Indonesian is the second frequently used language as 70.5% of respondents reported to use it while using social networking media, while local languages are the least frequently used language. The total number of respondents who reported to use their local language when using social media is only 16.2%.

Local languages only enjoy their dominance when the respondents speak with their family members and friends. The total number of respondents who reported to use their local language when speaking with their family reaches 93.3%. This number is hardly surprising because local languages generally function as a home language for many Indonesian citizens. Nevertheless, the Indonesian language provides considerable competition. The total number of those who use Indonesian when speaking with their family is 52.5%, and 6.7% of respondents even reported to use it as a sole language home. Meanwhile, English is only used by 4.7% of respondents when speaking with their families.

5.7% of respondents reported using their local as a sole language to speak with friends, 29.5% use it along with Indonesian, 4.8% use it along with English, and 53.3% use it along with both Indonesian and English. Thus, the total number of respondents who reported to use their local language when speaking with their friends is 93.3%, slightly higher than that of those who reported using Indonesian solely, which is 89.5%, while the total number of those who reported using English to speak with their friends is 62.9%.

TABLE 5. Language Use Frequency

No	Language	Use Frequency in a Week and Number of Respondents			
		< 10 hours	10-15 hours	15-30 hours	> 30 hours
1	English	56.2%	23.8%	15.2%	4.8%
2	Indonesian	21%	23.8%	20%	35.2%
3	Local language	10.5%	16.2%	20%	53.3%

Table 5 shows that as many as 56.2% of respondents reported to use English less than 10 hours a week, and only 4.8% of them reported to use

it more than 30 hours. This is surprising considering the fact that they are EFL learners. Meanwhile, 53.3% of respondents reported to use their local more than 30 hours in a week, perhaps when they

speak with their family and friends. 35.2% of respondents reported to use Indonesian more than 30 hours in a week.

3. CONCLUSIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH

In a multilingual situation, it is in their very nature that languages compete with each other. The present study attempted to capture the picture of this competition. As the results have revealed, Indonesian, which enjoys its status as an official language, is dominant over local languages and English. Although local languages are still dominant in terms of productive use, Indonesian is very dominant in terms of receptive use such as reading and watching TV. On top of that, Indonesian also is increasingly used as a home language by the respondents and for social intercourse with their peers of the same ethnicity. One thing English teachers might want to take note of is that although English exposure is getting higher than ever, thanks to the easier Internet access and invasion of English music and movies, the EFL learners do not necessarily use it productively.

The present study has a sampling limitation. The fact that the survey was conducted in one town entails that the results of the study cannot capture the whole picture of the multilingual situation of Indonesia. Therefore, further studies will involve more diverse respondents of their ethnicity. Ethnicity becomes central in the study of this like because when Indonesian peoples talk about themselves as speaking a local language such as Sundanese, Javanese, Madurese, and Banjarese, this also often indicates the same ethnic identity.

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