

Students' Attitudes Towards Indonesian Varieties and Other Languages: A Case Study in Tangerang

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates Indonesian-speaking students' attitudes towards Standard Indonesian Colloquial Jakarta Indonesian, regional language, and foreign language. Participants in this study are students of secondary- and high schools ($N=745$) who live in Tangerang City and South Tangerang, neighboring areas of Jakarta, where the inhabitants are mainly multilinguals. Data of this study were collected from questionnaires, distributed at schools. We investigated their pride of the observed languages, the importance of the languages, and their intention to improve the languages. Findings in this study suggest that the attitude towards these languages has a relation with the social functions which mainly governed by language policy in educational setting.

Keywords: Language Attitude, Indonesian-speaking Students, Bahasa Indonesia, Colloquial Jakarta Indonesian.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the study of language attitudes, Garret [1] suggests that attitudes can be an input or output from social action. Including in social actions is education, especially in the condition that more than one language exists. Studies on language attitudes in educational settings reveal that students' attitudes were determined by their own experiences of language use which were built upon specific emotional, affective, and cognitive factors (see, for example, Tódor & Dégi, [2]. In this study, we observed attitudes as the output of learning in the educational setting, with the focus on affective and cognitive aspects: pride, importance, and intent to improve the languages.

This study was conducted in two cities located in neighbouring areas of Jakarta, namely Tangerang City (or *Kota Tangerang*) and South Tangerang (*Tangerang Selatan*). While the border of the former is located on the eastern side of Jakarta, the latter is on the southern. Both cities are under the administration of Banten Province. Report on the National Survey 2010 (see Ananta, Arifin, Hasbullah, & H, [3]) shows that people in this province are mainly used Indonesian, which is similar to Jakarta's sociolinguistic situation. Even though the Banten area was previously dominated by Betawi and Chinese ethnics, the two cities are nowadays inhabited by various ethnic groups, including the bigger

ones: Javanese, Sundanese, Malay, and Batak. Children who were born and are raised in these areas, in general, are familiar with multi-cultural and multilingual situations. At school, they learn Standard Indonesian and English formally. Many schools in the Banten area teach Sundanese, the local language. In daily activities, generally, they speak as the Jakartans, using Colloquial Jakarta Indonesian. It is important, therefore, to investigate the language attitudes among the younger generations in these areas.

As a multilingual country where its language policy is governed by laws and establishes the role of national, foreign, and regional languages in education, Indonesia is still an unexplored place for research on language attitudes in educational settings. Previous studies on Indonesian students' language attitudes had various foci, especially on the observed languages. For example, studies on Indonesian students' attitudes towards English (see Setiyadi & Sukirlan, [4]; Utami, Ratnadewi, & Yunianti, [5]), towards Indonesian (see Sutama, Pinatih, & Suandi, [6]; Nuryani, [7]), and towards Standard Indonesian and Colloquial Jakarta Indonesian [8]. This study addresses students' attitudes towards Indonesian varieties—the Standard Indonesian and Colloquial Jakarta Indonesian, regional language, and foreign language, especially on how they perceived these languages as the language of pride, how they intent to improve these languages (and variety), and

how they perceived the importance of using the language in daily activities.¹

The main data of this study was obtained from questionnaires which were distributed at four schools (two secondary schools, one high school, and one vocational school whose degree is equal to high school) located in Tangerang City and South Tangerang. All schools used Indonesian as the main medium of instruction, taught English and Sundanese as subjects. We observed that interactions between students and teachers were mainly in Colloquial Jakarta Indonesian, especially outside the classroom.

2. METHODS

Seven hundred and fifty-one students participated in the survey which was conducted at school upon the headmasters' and teachers' permission. They provided a place and a time slot for the survey. The respondents were selected by the teachers, based on students' time availability. However, we found that six participants did not fill out the questionnaires completely, especially in the section on attitudes. Therefore, we had 745 completed questionnaires.

The questionnaire consisted of a section of demographic information (age, gender, parents' ethnicity and occupation, respondents' first language, and the use of regional and foreign language), the section on language choices in certain interlocutors, topics, and situations, and items on language attitudes. Three items to examine respondents' attitudes towards the observed languages were language pride, the importance of the language, and intention to improve the language. The statement on pride was *Saya bangga dapat berbahasa Indonesia/ Indonesia Jakarta/daerah/asing* 'I am proud to speak Standard Indonesian/ Colloquial Jakarta Indonesian/regional language/foreign language'; on the importance of the language was *Kemampuan berbahasa Indonesia baku/Indonesia Jakarta/daerah/asing merupakan hal yang penting dalam kehidupan kita sehari-hari*' the ability of using Standard Indonesian/Colloquial Jakarta Indonesian/regional language/foreign language is an important thing in our daily life'; and on intention to

¹ This study was a part of the survey on language use and attitude by urban youth in Jakarta, Depok, and Tangerang for the project entitled "Pemerolehan Variasi Bahasa Indonesia pada Anak-anak Keluarga Urban", funded by Directorate General of Higher Education, The Ministry of Higher Education, under the scheme of Penelitian Dasar Unggulan Perguruan Tinggi (PDUPT) (NKB-118/UN2.RST/HKP.05.00/2020). See also Kushartanti & Zakiyah [11], Kushartanti, Zakiyah, & Nazarudin [11] for the reports on the language choices and language attitudes towards code-switching in Tangerang respectively; Kushartanti, Ihsan, & Nazarudin [8] for the report on the language attitudes towards Indonesian varieties in Depok.

improve the language was *Saya harus meningkatkan kemampuan berbahasa Indonesia baku/ Indonesia Jakarta/daerah/asing* 'I have to improve my Standard Indonesian/Colloquial Jakarta Indonesian/regional language/foreign language'

Attitudes towards the observed languages were measured through Likert Scale: *sangat tidak setuju* 'strongly disagree' (value =1), *tidak setuju* 'disagree' (value =2), *ragu-ragu* 'unsure' (value =3), *setuju* 'agree' (value =4), *sangat setuju* 'strongly agree' (value = 5). Means of the value from the analysis accounted for the tendencies of respondents' attitudes. Individual choices were analysed through the analysis of frequencies.

3. ANALYSIS

Based on the questionnaires, we found that our respondents consisted of 280 boys and 425 girls (forty respondents did not fill out the section on gender) and of 377 secondary school students and 368 high school students whose age range was 13-18 years old. In the majority, they come from middle-class families (based on information about parents' occupations) whose parents are Javanese (in the majority), Sundanese, Betawi, Batak, and Minangkabau (see also Kushartanti & Zakiyah [11]). The respondents' first language, in the majority, was Indonesian (87%). Only a few acquired regional and foreign languages as their first language, and several of them acquired more than one language in their first years of life. It was found that 60% still used regional language at home (which was mainly Javanese and Sundanese); 60% could speak a foreign language (mainly English) (see also Kushartanti & Zakiyah, [8]). Note that English is one of the main subjects at school, as well as Sundanese which is taught as local content. Based on the finding, we can confirm that the majority, students who participated in this study were multilingual.

This section presents the results from the quantitative analysis, which are presented in tables, showing comparisons between the observed languages. The summary is presented in Table 1. Here we present the mean (M) scores and Standard Deviation (SD).

Table 1. Attitudes towards the Observed Languages on Pride, the Intention for Improvement, and the Importance of Using the Observed Languages (1 = Strongly Disagree; 5 = Strongly Agree)

| | PRIDE (N = 745) | | | |
|-----------------------|-----------------|------|------|------|
| | SI | CJI | RL | FL |
| M | 4,50 | 4,12 | 4,21 | 4,28 |
| SD | 0,58 | 0,65 | 0,75 | 0,80 |
| IMPROVEMENT (N = 745) | | | | |
| | SI | CJI | RL | FL |
| M | 4,44 | 3,67 | 4,14 | 4,42 |
| SD | 0,70 | 0,84 | 0,74 | 0,72 |
| IMPORTANCE (N = 745) | | | | |
| | SI | CJI | RL | FL |
| M | 4,28 | 3,79 | 3,54 | 3,85 |

| | | | | |
|----|------|------|------|------|
| SD | 0,77 | 0,82 | 0,82 | 0,90 |
|----|------|------|------|------|

Notes: M=mean; SD=Standard Deviation; SI=Standard Indonesian; CJI=Colloquial Jakarta Indonesian; RL=Regional Language; FL=Foreign Language

Results of the analysis of language pride (see PRIDE section in Table 1) indicated that students in our study had positive attitudes towards all the observed languages, given that they tended to choose “agree” or “strongly agree” to the statement *Saya bangga dapat berbahasa Indonesia/ Indonesia Jakarta/daerah/asing* ‘I am proud to speak Standard Indonesian/ Colloquial Jakarta Indonesian/regional language/foreign language’. From the analysis of individual attitudes, it was confirmed that the majority (>85%), were proud of using the observed languages. Yet, it is shown that there were tendencies that they put different values on different languages/varieties. While Standard Indonesian had the highest score as the language of pride, it was indicated that the regional language had the lowest. In our observation at school, the latter was seldom used in conversation, even though some expressions existed.

On the statement *Saya harus meningkatkan kemampuan berbahasa Indonesia baku/ Indonesia Jakarta/daerah/asing* ‘I have to improve my Standard Indonesian/Colloquial Jakarta Indonesian/regional language/foreign language’ (see IMPROVEMENT section in Table 1), it was indicated that these students tended to have positive attitudes towards Standard Indonesian, foreign and regional languages (mentioned from the highest to the lower scores). It was found that they tended to be unsure when they were confronted with Colloquial Jakarta Indonesian. The findings suggest how the need for improving the language was dealing with the status of the languages in the educational setting. At school, Standard Indonesian, foreign language, and regional languages are taught as subjects, while Colloquial Jakarta Indonesian is not. It is interesting, however, to find that the number of those who put positive attitudes (agree and strongly agree) toward the informal variety of Indonesian was more than half of the total respondents (59,73%), as presented in Table 2. It is suggested that, even though Colloquial Jakarta Indonesian is not taught formally at school, these students need to use it in daily interactions.

Table 2. Individual Attitudes towards the Improvement of the Observed Language (in percentages)

| N= 745 | IMPROVEMENT | | | |
|-------------------|-------------|-------|-------|-------|
| | SI % | CJI % | RL % | FL % |
| NA | 0,40 | 0,13 | 0,13 | 0,00 |
| Strongly disagree | 0,13 | 0,81 | 0,00 | 0,40 |
| Disagree | 0,40 | 6,04 | 2,15 | 1,48 |
| Unsure | 5,77 | 33,15 | 13,42 | 7,11 |
| Agree | 40,27 | 44,70 | 51,68 | 37,32 |
| Strongly agree | 53,02 | 15,03 | 32,62 | 53,69 |

Notes: SI=Standard Indonesian; CJI=Colloquial Jakarta Indonesian; RL=Regional Language; FL=Foreign Language

Meanwhile, results on the analysis of statement *Kemampuan berbahasa Indonesia baku/Indonesia Jakarta/daerah/asing merupakan hal yang penting dalam kehidupan kita sehari-hari*’ the ability of using Standard Indonesian/Colloquial Jakarta Indonesian/regional language/foreign language is an important thing in our daily life (see IMPORTANCE section in Table 1) show that Standard Indonesian was also the most important language (agree and strongly agree) according to these students (M=4,28, SD=0,77). Interestingly, many of them tended to see that other languages were less important (CJI: M=3,67, SD=0,84; RL: M=3,54, SD=0,82; FL: M=3,85, SD=0,90). Analyses on the tendencies in individual attitudes towards the observed languages revealed that they have various attitudes, as presented in Table 3. It was interesting that the least value from the analyses was from regional language (RL), suggesting that—according to these students—the ability to use the language was not as important as other languages in daily life.

Table 3. Individual Attitudes towards the Importance of the Observed Languages (in percentages)

| N = 745 | IMPORTANCE | | | |
|-------------------|------------|-------|-------|-------|
| | SI % | CJI % | RL % | FL % |
| NA | 0,13 | 0,13 | 0,40 | 0,40 |
| Strongly disagree | 0,13 | 0,67 | 0,54 | 0,94 |
| Disagree | 1,88 | 5,23 | 7,65 | 5,64 |
| Unsure | 11,95 | 25,50 | 36,91 | 23,09 |
| Agree | 41,74 | 51,28 | 45,10 | 46,44 |
| Strongly agree | 44,16 | 17,18 | 9,40 | 23,49 |

Notes: SI=Standard Indonesian; CJI=Colloquial Jakarta Indonesian; RL=Regional Language; FL=Foreign Language.

It was suggested that the attitudes towards Indonesian varieties—Standard Indonesian and Colloquial Jakarta Indonesian—were influenced by the social status of the language, as indicated by Moeliono as cited by Oetomo, [9] and Sneddon, [10]. The finding is similar to Kushartanti, Ihsan, & Nazarudin, Attitudes towards Indonesian Varieties by Jakarta Indonesian-Speaking Adolescents in Depok City, 2020. Moreover, it was also suggested that the educational setting where the research was conducted had an important role in the attitudes [1]. It also relates to language policy in the Indonesian educational system. According to the Article 33 Laws No 20/2003 National Education System “1) *Bahasa Indonesia sebagai Bahasa Negara menjadi bahasa pengantar dalam pendidikan nasional; 2) Bahasa daerah dapat digunakan sebagai bahasa pengantar dalam tahap awal pendidikan apabila diperlukan dalam penyampaian pengetahuan dan/atau keterampilan tertentu; 3) Bahasa asing dapat digunakan sebagai bahasa pengantar pada satuan pendidikan tertentu untuk mendukung kemampuan*

berbahasa asing peserta didik.” 1) Indonesian as the state language is the language of instruction in national education; 2) regional languages can be used as the language of instruction in the early stages of education if it is necessary to convey certain knowledge and/or skills; 3) foreign languages can be used as the language of instruction in certain educational units to support students' foreign language skills.’ Even though it needs further investigation, findings in this research on the intentions to improve the Standard Indonesian, regional language, and foreign language can be seen as the output of learning through educational settings related to the language policy. Meanwhile, attitudes towards Colloquial Jakarta Indonesian were influenced by its function in daily life.

4. CONCLUSION

This study found that students in Tangerang City and South Tangerang had positive attitudes towards Standard Indonesian in all domains: pride, importance, and the need for improvement. Meanwhile, they had various attitudes towards the other observed languages: they were the pride of using Colloquial Jakarta Indonesian, regional and foreign language, need to improve a regional and foreign language and see more positive attitudes towards Colloquial Jakarta Indonesian and foreign language in terms of their importance in daily interactions. These findings suggest that students' attitudes towards these languages were influenced by social status and functions, especially in the educational setting.

This study illustrates an overview of the language attitudes of Indonesian younger generations. Even though it suggests that Indonesian younger generations who live in urban areas which are close to the capital of Indonesia had certain attitudes towards Standard Indonesian, Colloquial Jakarta Indonesian, regional, and foreign languages, this study was restricted to an area. A further study that includes more areas is needed to have a bigger illustration of how younger generations of Indonesia view the languages existing in their daily life.

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