



# Is *Krama* Speech Level Still Alive in Millennial Circumstance?: The Evidence from Javanese Children

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**Abstract.** This research aimed to investigate the Javanese language shift and maintenance of Javanese millennial children in East Java. Recent research used the quantitative-descriptive method to analyze the data. Data collection techniques that were used in this study were questionnaires. The results of this research indicate the young generation's ability is decreased to maintain a higher level of their vernacular language. The data showed that the millennials prefer shifting their language to 2 other types of language, such as *Bahasa Indonesia* and *ngoko* language (the lower-level of Javanese language). The use of *krama* speech is rarely used in this present time by the millennials. They prefer to use the Indonesian language rather than *krama* speech while conversing with someone older than them. This research reveals that *krama* speech is still used by millennials even though the frequency is lower than the other speech levels. However, the existence of *krama* speech among millennials is still alive.

**Keywords:** Language shift · Language maintenance · Millennials · *Krama* speech

## 1 Introduction

Each human needs a language to express their ideas, particularly in communication with others in daily life. Within the language's existence, people can verbalize everything in their thoughts. We must remember that it is hardly impossible to communicate with others or express an idea without language. Sapir [1] defines language as an instruction of social reality. Wierzbicka [2] also stated that "there is a close link between the society's life and lexicon of the language spoken."

Indonesia has more languages than other countries in the Asia-Pacific domain. Amount of the exact number of languages in Indonesia is improbable to reach due to the continual increase of languages in several regions. Several regional languages have prominent speakers and extensive frequency usages, such as Javanese, Sundanese, Madurese, and Balinese. In Indonesia, multilingual communities actively speak and switch their language to another language daily. Regarding the globalization era, this country tends to master three main languages as a part of daily conversations involving

the Indonesian language as the national language, Javanese as the regional language, and foreign language such as English [3].

Language shift is a process made by the generation of speakers, either the individual or the community, who continuously experience losing their proficiency in their primary language or another language they use in their community [4]. It also points out the switching to one language as the primary language to converse and socialize in a community [5].

The existence of the language must be maintained because it can be a symbol of the speaker's identity. Language maintenance is defined as the stability of the speaker number and language distribution of the speakers, both children and adults, as well as the reservation in a particular domain (e.g. home, family, and school) [6]. For example, when the speaker's language respects a higher value on the preservation of the language in a culture, they indirectly or directly can be marked as maintaining the language. The definition of language maintenance is the regular occurrence or use of languages, with the dominant or dominant speaker willing to preserve the language and teach it to the young generation.

Language shift became the primary occurrence of maintaining the local or heritage language among people, particularly the millennials or young generation. Millennials face the issue of difficulties in keeping their local language in the situation of the modern era. The existence of other languages, such as the national language (Indonesia), the lower level of the Javanese language (*ngoko*), and English, make millennials use *krama* as their vernacular and local language (L1). They are inclined to shift their language from their first language to other languages, such as *ngoko* and Indonesian, as their mother language (L2). Thus, the way to prevent the massiveness of the language shift phenomenon and decrease the opportunity of the language becoming extinct requires language maintenance. Language maintenance is related to the speakers' preservation of the minority language in the stable association with the majority language [7].

Several studies have previously done lead to this study. First, Setiawan [8] found that respondents aged 11–70 lack competency in the Javanese language. Still, they have an ability in the low level of the Javanese language and show support for maintaining the Javanese language. Second, Sagimin [9] showed that the young generations in Indonesia, particularly at Pamulang University, are still keeping their vernacular language in several domains even if they live far from the speaker community, whether they tend to shift their language along with globalization. Third, Farisiyah & Zamzani [10] involved respondents from several provinces and various occupations, focusing on the millennials and different ages contributing to this research. The result of this research is that the intensity of their preference for using the local language is more significant than using the national language (Indonesian). It concluded from this study that local language use for several ethnicities remains to survive because of their preservation in home and family domains.

This study has a different focus from the previous studies, which are: the bilingual community's ability to use the Javanese language and *Bahasa Indonesia* on a different scale but still showing an excellent attitude to support the Javanese language [8], the young generation's self-awareness while shifting and maintaining their language [9], and whether the frequency of usage of national language dominates more than the local

language but it remains alive [10]. In this research, the researcher aims to reveal the *krama* speech used by millennials and how they maintain their language as evidence of their ethnic pride. The researcher has several reasons for choosing this current topic. First, the stereotype and the use of the Indonesian language is neutral at any age and under any circumstances. It causes Javanese millennials to be more willing to use the Indonesian language and *ngoko* in their daily life than their polite way of the Javanese language (*krama*). Secondly, the researcher aims to know whether they use the national language and *ngoko* in their daily lives and do they have an attitude or an effort to use or at least understand *krama* speech.

A recent study applied quantitative-descriptive research in language shift and maintenance among the young generation or millennials in East Java. The Millennial uses Bahasa Indonesia, Javanese, Madurese, and English daily. The Javanese language has three types of speech degrees which are low speech level (*ngoko*), middle speech level (*madya*), and polite degree (*krama*). The research question to reveal this phenomenon are: (1) How can Generation Z help revitalize millennials' ability in the Javanese language (*krama*)? (2) why do millennials speak another language more fluently than their polite grade of Javanese language (*krama*)?

## 2 Methods

This research is based on the survey where the researcher looked at the millennial (Javanese youth) behaviour concerning the Javanese language as an identity of Javanese ethnicity. These behaviours in several contexts, along with their degree of proficiency, focus on examining the language shift and maintenance. A questionnaire is made in the form of a closed question. The research design that is used in this present study is descriptive statistics. Descriptive statistics is a common type this study used in quantitative research. The descriptive statistical analysis use of quantitative data has an advantage in giving a good foundation for the structured description and analysis [11]. The writer's reason for using closed questions is to gain data to be substituted into the diagram and point of percentage to make it easy to understand. Also, the data obtained from the survey was beneficial in helping construct a clear conclusion for this research.

For the data collection, the writer distributed the online survey to the young generation who grew up as Javanese. Ten respondents contribute to this questionnaire (8; 80%) are female, and (2; 20%) are the number of male respondents. The respondent's domicile is in East Java from Gresik and Sidoarjo city. These two cities were chosen since it has the closest distance to the writer's area, and the circumstances are understood-well by the writer. Respondents are given a message from the WhatsApp application to ask for permission for their willingness to fill out the google form. The data from the participants are from the 10 participants gathered on June 7, 2022. The data are to reveal what factors make the millennials maintain the polite degree of their vernacular language (*krama* speech) and discover why the millennials are more fluent in other languages. In this study, it is assumed that millennials are more fluent in the lower degree of the Javanese language and the national language (Bahasa Indonesia).

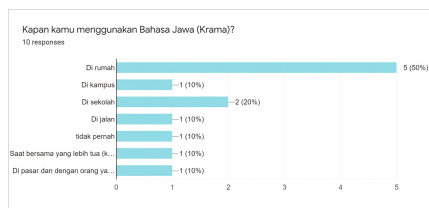
### 3 Results and Discussion

The study result is related to the demographic background of the respondents who contributed to this research. Ten respondents came from one type of ethnicity in Indonesia from various villages in two cities. The language used is the Javanese language by millennials in several domains: family there is 60% per cent of 10 respondents use it. Millennials use it to communicate with their grandparents. Contrary to the use of *krama* speech in the educational domain is in the 30% percentage. The use of the other domain in the public domain is 10%, which is slightly lower than the different domains. The public domain in this study consists of the marketplace and the street. It means that only several respondents use *krama* speech outside of the family domain. It is also because of their habit of using the lower degree of Javanese language in daily life. It does not mean that the use of *krama* speech is decreasing among millennials, but the intensity of the use is. They directly switch to the Indonesian language when they don't know the exact word for a particular term. Millennials still understand and use a few words in *krama* speech.

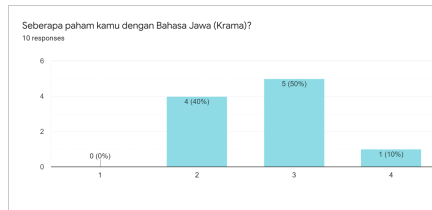
- a. What are some of the ways that can help revitalize millennials' ability in the Javanese Language at the *krama* speech level?

The Fig. 1 shows that 60% of the respondents are willing to use the local language to maintain the Javanese language, particularly in *krama* speech in the family domain, used in the home, and to communicate with grandparents. They still use the *krama* speech to show a polite manner in communicating with the older people in the house surrounding. The understanding of millennials also supports this evidence in *krama* speech, contributing to answering the first research question.

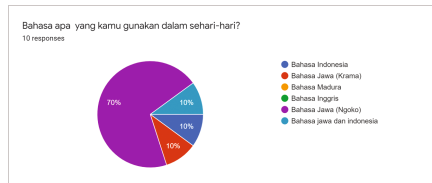
From the Fig. 2, the understanding of millennials of the Javanese language is quite impressive. The graphic has four numerical answers, which number one is for the millennials that have not known the *krama* speech, number two is for millennials that less understand the *krama* speech, number three is for they that who understand the *krama* speech, and the last one is for millennials that understand entirely of the *krama* speech. In this data, 50% of the respondents chose the number three, which means that most of them know the *krama* speech, which proves that they still maintain the polite degree of their vernacular language. It also can be seen from Fig. 1 that millennials still try to use



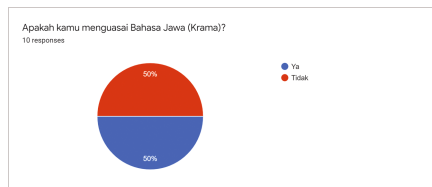
**Fig. 1.** The use of *krama* speech in the family domain (home and with the grandparents), in the public domain, and the public domain (market and street).



**Fig. 2.** Millennials’ understanding of the polite level of Javanese Language (*krama* speech).



**Fig. 3.** Their daily language use.



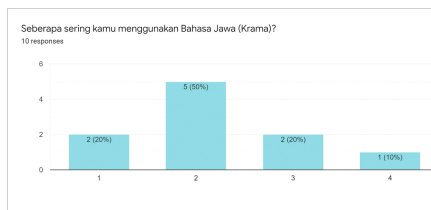
**Fig. 4.** Millennials’ ability in *krama* speech.

the *krama* speech on several occasions, such as in the family, educational, and public domains.

b. Why do millennials speak another language more fluently than their polite grade of Javanese Language (*krama*)?

In line with research question number two, revealing why millennials are more fluent in other languages than the polite level of the Javanese Language (*krama*.) Fig. 3 shows that 70% of the 10 respondents mostly used ngoko in their daily lives. Millennials are more inclined to use *ngoko* than *krama*. The writer found that two main reasons lead to millennials’ fluency in *ngoko*. First, *krama* speech is rarely and only used in particular circumstances linked with Fig. 1, which portrays that *krama* speech is only used when conversing with someone older than them. Second, the exposure and the involvement of millennials’ use of *ngoko* in daily life associated with Fig. 3 limited their decreasing capability toward *krama*. To dig a more profound understanding, the Fig. 4 shows the amount of the young generation of Java that can utter or master the *krama* speech.

Figure 4 shows that half of the ten respondents can master *krama* speech. It can be concluded that half of them cannot utter *krama* speech. They know what several words



**Fig. 5.** Millennials' intensity of using *krama* speech.



**Fig. 6.** Millennials' preference to shift into the Indonesian Language.

or sentences mean in *krama* speech but are limited in speaking entirely using *krama* speech.

Moreover, Fig. 5 shows the intensity of *krama*'s speech used by millennials. From the questionnaire, the researcher provides the answer on a scale from one to four. This numeric symbol has its respective categorization meaning. Number one can be chosen when millennials never use the *krama* speech. For number two, the respondent can select this answer option if they rarely used *krama* speech. Number three is for millennials that often use the *krama* speech. And the last number is number four which can be chosen when millennials always use the *krama* speech.

This result shows that 50% of the respondents rarely used *krama* speech. Related to Fig. 3 and Fig. 4 the dominance of the *ngoko* used and the limitation of their ability in mastered the *krama* speech make them contribute to the decrease of young generation speakers of the Javanese language generation speakers of Javanese language (Fig. 6).

From this last data, millennials' answers show their intention to switch to Bahasa Indonesia directly. This act portrays that millennials are more willing to use Bahasa Indonesia than *krama* speech because 70% of the respondents chose Bahasa Indonesia as their preferred language.

After viewing all the answers from the ten respondents in the online surveys, millennials still maintain the polite degree of their vernacular. It is proven by their intensity of understanding the *krama* speech and still trying to use it. However, while they indirectly maintain a language, their daily use in *ngoko* and their preference to choose (Bahasa Indonesia) as the language option when they have no idea how to find the exact word for a particular term. It means that their intensity is usually used in Indonesia rather than *krama* speech while talking with the older parent or people can be concluded at a high rate. Half of the respondents cannot master or speak *krama* lingo.

The research question related the language shift and maintenance to reveal *krama* speech usage among millennials. This point is associated with the idea of language shift,

that process is done by a community that constantly comes to an end of using one of their two languages [12].

Considering the previous studies that generate a similar point, prior research [8] shows that their respondents (aged 11–70) have low competency in the Javanese language. It is related to the result of this present study that focuses on millennials fluent in a low level of Javanese language (*ngoko*) and *Bahasa Indonesia*. At the same time, they cannot find the matching word in *krama* (a higher level of Javanese language). In comparison, another study [9] mentioned that wherever the respondents are, they keep communicating using their local language. Concerning this study, whether millennials are simply shifting their language, they still have the effort to maintain it; even though half of them only understand *krama* they still try to use it. Interestingly, similar to the previous study [10], the local language still survives in this era because the respondents are positive toward the local language. It is proven by their attitude toward still using their local language in the family and neighbourhood domains. It is related to the present study that the higher level of Javanese Language is still surviving and still alive, considering millennials' attitude toward *krama* among the higher frequency use is *ngoko* and *Bahasa Indonesia*. They are still preserved mainly in the family or home domain which relates to the previous studies above, which is the right place to maintain a language.

The result of this study reveals that most millennials still use *krama* speech and the national language (Bahasa Indonesia) at a different level. Most still use *krama* speech while communicating with their family, particularly with their grandparents. Their attitude towards the local language (*krama* speech) is quite impressive. They can understand the *krama* speech; half can speak several words but cannot master it. Their intensity to use the *krama* speech is still alive whether they have any difficulties using this language. They are still using it even in a particular domain, such as family.

## 4 Conclusion

Based on the discussion and result of this study from the online survey or questionnaire related to the language shift and language maintenance among the millennials reveal that the use of *krama* speech and the use of other languages, such as *Bahasa Indonesia* and *ngoko*, at different levels. Most still use *krama* speech while communicating with their family, particularly with their grandparents. Their attitude towards the local language (*krama* speech) is quite impressive. They can understand *krama* speech, but half of them cannot utter it. It can be seen from their tendency related to their daily language use is using *ngoko*.

**Authors' Contributions.** Salsa Amalia conceived and planned the research. Salsa Amalia and Slamet Setiawan carried out the the research. Salsa Amalia, Slamet Setiawan, and Haryanto Atmowardoyo contributed to the interpretation of the results. Salsa Amalia took the lead in writing the manuscript. All authors provided critical feedback and helped shape the research, analysis and manuscript.

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