

Parent-child Communication Strategies in Preserving Sundanese Language

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Abstract—Sundanese as a first language has gradually experience decline in their users' proficiency, particularly for Sundanese living in the second language environment. This process is generally caused by both isolations from speakers of the first language and the acquisition and use of a second language. This study aims to investigate the parent-child communication strategies in preserving the Sundanese language in an environment in which Sundanese is not a major language spoken in the area. A qualitative case study was employed to analyze the topic. The data were collected by performing interviews and observations toward three Sundanese families who live in non-Sundanese language environment in Jakarta. The findings show that the parents performed two main strategies: direct language lessons and subconscious affirmations of the first language. The strategies were carried out in three phases: the initial planning, language preservation action, and feedback evaluation. It is expected that the study would contribute more insights into the preservation native languages and reduction the risk of language attrition.

Keywords—*interpersonal communication; parent-child communication; language preservation; Sundanese language; sundanese ethnicity*

I. INTRODUCTION

Parent-child communication in the use of the first language is essential in determining whether a mother tongue can be maintained or gradually lost from generation to generation. First language mastery for children in a cultural context arises through daily conversations, interactions, and parent-child communication routines [1]. Interactions between parents and children occur naturally throughout their daily routines. These interactions create opportunities to support children's abilities in language acquisition because parents know best about their children and their daily routines. In line with this, Akamoglu and Dinnebeil suggested that parental communication can serve as an embedded tool for mastering a language through daily communication routines [2].

Communication can support, improve and maintain the native tongue from generation to generation. However, in a conversation within a majority group, a minority group tend to be accustomed to the second language, thus experiencing a shift in the use of the mother tongue. The most drastic effect of this is the extinction of the native language [3]. In other words, the transition from a spoken to an extinct language occurs

when a different language is directly replacing the previous language. Languages are extinct because the younger generations are no longer use them a mean of communication and tend to use other languages [4].

Linguistic and cultural adjustments do not take place in a vacuum. Cultural and language shift is presumed to be an unintended result of the interaction among sociolinguistic, effective, and cultural variables that work together to affect one's choice or use of one language over another. As part of the cultural and socio-linguistic environment, parent-child communication serves as a prominent factor in preserving a native language because the first filter and education for younger generations are their parents.

Based on the rationale above, the paper will discuss the parent-child communication strategies in preserving a mother tongue in an environment of a different ethnic group. Sundanese language preservation became the main subject of the study where the authors investigated how a family can preserve the Sundanese native language even though they are living in a different linguistic and cultural community.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Sundanese is a Malayo-Polynesian language spoken by the Sundanese ethnic group in Indonesia. It has approximately 39 million native speakers on the island of Java; they represent about 15% of Indonesia's total population [5]. However, the extinction of the Sundanese language is considered increasingly evident. The habits of millennial generations have shifted. They consider other languages to be more superior than using Sundanese as a mother tongue. It is predicted that the lack of language conservation by the Sundanese younger generations can "eliminate" the language. It is estimated that by 2026, the extinction of Sundanese could occur [6].

For Sundanese immigrants, the problem is more severe. Since they live in a whole new cultural group, they will adjust the language, and it is not surprising that the elements of Sundanese are getting more and more eroded by other languages. The chance of mastering the first language for children is very small for immigrants because the dominant spoken language in the environment is different and communication barriers usually occurred from the language differences. According to Kouwenhoven, Ernestus and van

Mulken when a speaker experiences or anticipate communication barriers the speaker will use a strategy to keep the communication flowing, and this strategy usually will override one of the languages and eventually, one language will be more dominant than the others [7].

Furthermore, Sun argued some affecting factors that can accelerate language shift as opposed to elements that support language maintenance [8]. She suggested that:

In theoretical and empirical inquiries, there are factors that can change a first language such as, just to name a few, the suppressive or permissive attitude by the majority group, the socio-economic and historical status of the minority, the numbers of birth rate and mixed marriages, the mass media, religions, the role of institutional power, the 'success' to interact with the majority group, the number of claimants of the minority language and the number of institutions that support the language in the community, the social networks of the individuals, etc., have been examined [8].

It has also been indicated that the effects of these elements on language maintenance and language shift are differed in nature according to the social contexts in which they were studied. The present study focused on how the language is preserved in the middle of a community where the majority of the people speaks a different language. The primary aim of the study is to provide insights into the interpersonal communication strategies of Sundanese immigrant speakers among the melting pot community in the capital city of Indonesia regarding language use and language attitude. Another important point of this study is to make a structured overview of the language preservation strategy in a family setting.

III. METHOD

The data were collected through Interviews and observations toward three Sundanese families who live as immigrants in Jakarta, Indonesia. The data collection was conducted via personal contacts with the informants over a period extending from January to June 2018. Documentation study was employed to back up the results of the interviews so it can give the results more credibility.

Data analysis was carried out qualitatively by employing a study case method. The method is used to explore and understand social or humanitarian problems in the perspective of individuals or groups of people who are experiencing them [9]. By applying this approach, the authors can describe the role of parent-child interpersonal communication strategies in the preservation of the Sundanese language within a different cultural and linguistic environment.

The informants of the study were selected based on the study criteria. The informants were those who can provide a useful source of information on the direction of language shift among the Sundanese families regarding their language use and language attitude. Based on that criteria, the informants of the study are three Sundanese families who moved from the Sunda region (West Java, Indonesia) and lived in Kampung Betawi (Betawi ethnic environment in the capital city of Indonesia) as immigrant families. Whereas for supporting informants, the

authors seek information from source persons who have a close relationship and interactively engage with the Sundanese families who moved from his native area and lives permanently in that environment.

In a rather simpler way, the research methodology will be described in Table 1 below.

TABLE I. METHODOLOGY

Research Question	Data Collection	Informants	Analysis Method
What strategies are employed in the parent-child interpersonal communication to preserve the Sundanese language?	Interviews and observations The data were collected from January to March 2018	Three Sundanese families who migrated to a different ethnic and cultural environment	Qualitative Paradigm Study case method The visual data were collected, categorized, interpreted and described in descriptive narrative form.

IV. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

The found numerous strategies employed by parents to their children in preserving Sundanese language in the family environment. There are three stages in the strategy: the initial planning stage, action or practice, and feedback.

The strategy that is carried out is to compile what steps the parents will take before providing instruction to children in language preservation. The starting point for building positive things and mutual trust for parents. Explain how parents can achieve their goals because parents know the needs of children and what routines children do in their daily life as the initial planning stage. Then the parents take some actions or practice in a plan that determines the way of learning, the teaching process, how long it should be given, where, when, what lessons to be given and what not to. All of that then will be put into the family's daily routine and activities with children that are expected to be parallel to the parents' idea in developing the child's language skills.

The strategy was conducted in the form of modeling, direct learning, role making, and demonstration. After the practice is carried out, the children will give feedback about what works well (what parents do right and succeed) and about the improvement of the use of the right strategy. To show the results of the strategies that have been implemented, how the child's response to the strategy is to develop language understanding to be more profound. Role modeling by applying the native language can help children decide what language to be accepted [3].

In preserving Sundanese language, the authors indicated that interaction, the role of culture, innatism (the ability of

language in children's biological growth), openness and supportive attitudes are the prominent factor of sustainable preservation. Furthermore, there are two impactful aspects in preserving the Sundanese language, namely the role of using Sundanese in the surrounding environment and cognitivism (the ability to use a language in interacting with the surrounding environment).

The cultural identity was embedded by their parents by keep using Sundanese language and even when communicating with others; the families did not change their dialect and constantly use code mixing to show their cultural identity. They performed that way to set an example that a native language should be part of the cultural identity. Children's interest will arise in accepting a language due to the subtle supports such as using the language as part of daily conversation and embracing the native cultural elements [10].

V. CONCLUSION

Language is a principal element of any society because it enables people to interact and express themselves. When a language is gone, future generations will suffer the loss of a vital part of the culture that is needed to understand the culture itself completely. The fact puts language as a vulnerable feature of any cultural heritage, and it becomes especially important to preserve mother tongue language.

Based on the results of the study, The Sundanese parents performed two interpersonal communication strategies. They are the direct language lessons and subconscious affirmations of the first language. The evidence suggests that giving direct lessons through books, images, internet, and vocabulary building every day can help their children in processing Sundanese in their minds.

The subconscious affirmation was embedded by employing two strategies. First, developing the children's innatism (the ability of language in children's biological growth), creating openness and supportive atmosphere to use the language. Secondly, Sundanese language is affirmed through setting up

cultural attitudes that indicate the native cultural identity. The cultural attitude preserves the integrity of the Sundanese language. Communicating in the native tongue and frequently showing Sundanese cultural feature within the community can serve as a motivation for their children to accept both the native language and the cultural values.

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