Access to and Usage of Javanese in Mass Media among Yogyakarta Youth

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to explore the active and passive usage of the Javanese language by youths aged 10 to 17 in the Special Region of Yogyakarta. Conducted in the province’s five territorial units of Bantul Regency, Sleman Regency, Kulon Progo Regency, Gunung Kidul Regency, and Yogyakarta City, the specific objective is to determine the extent to which children and adolescents use mass media — particularly television, radio, and social media — as instruments to access contents in Javanese. It is crucial to examine how the constant flow of information affects their exposure to Javanese on various platforms as well as their use of the language on social media. This quantitative study surveyed 330 elementary, junior high, and senior high school students from both public and private schools in the province’s rural and urban areas. Similarly, despite its popularity, social media has yet to be used to the maximum by Yogyakarta youth to access content in Javanese or as a means to express the language — a setback created by the dominance of the Indonesian language.

Keywords: Javanese language; television; radio; social media; access

Introduction

In the Special Region of Yogyakarta, a heartland of Javanese culture, the Javanese language has been experiencing substantial vulnerability for both its registers — ngoko and krama. Javanese ngoko is generally used in casual exchanges between speakers who are on familiar terms, or by someone of high social rank to someone of lower social status. Meanwhile, the krama register carries a level of formality and politeness, employed by persons who are of same age and social standing but are unfamiliar with one another, or when speaking to a respected figure. The ngoko register is further subdivided into ngoko kasar (more casual) and ngoko alus (more formal), and the krama register is further subdivided into krama madya of intermediate formality and krama inggil, the most refined variation (Azila & Febriani, 2021; Sholihah, 2020; Suryadi, 2018).
The vulnerability of Javanese has been long suspected since the late twentieth century when linguist Joseph Errington undertook extensive research on the language in the Special Region of Yogyakarta and in Central Java’s Surakarta City (Errington, Irvine, & Schieffelin, 1998). He found that the krama register was more vulnerable than its informal equivalent. A high non-aristocratic social group known as the priyayi, who are structurally close to the aristocrats or highly educated families, was more likely to use the Javanese krama (Azila & Febriani, 2021; Sholihah, 2020; Suryadi, 2018). However, as social equality has been more prevalent in Javanese society, the structural distinction between the priyayi group and commoners has gradually eroded, which has had an effect on the functionality of the krama register.

The number of active and passive speakers of the different Javanese register varieties (ngoko kasar, ngoko alus, krama madya, and krama inggil) has likewise been steadily declining (Suparta, 2017). The minimal usage of Javanese by today’s school-age youngsters in Yogyakarta in their daily life demonstrates this claim. Udasmoro et al. (2023) discovered that in Yogyakarta only individuals aged 40 and over actively use the language, on account of the group’s strong linguistic practice. Furthermore, the use of Indonesian as the language of educational instruction and as students’ primary language while interacting with their teachers has reduced Javanese to the status of a passive language for the younger generations, meaning that it is understood but not actively used (Suwarno, 2001). It has also been discovered that, while Javanese krama was the natural register of choice in student-teacher exchanges for the previous three decades, this is no longer the case now that Indonesian has gained prominence (Putra, 2017; Vinansih, Ratnasari, & I, 2019). Researchers have examined measures for preserving the Javanese language (Hidayani & Macaryus, 2019). Relevant research includes analyses of government and community efforts to prevent the language’s extinction (Rochayanti, Pujaistuti, & Warsiki, 2012). Other studies have explored the general use of Javanese in society, including in social and familial circles (Meritseba, Rahardjo, & Pradekso, 2013; Munandar, 2013). Another study on the decline of the Javanese language was conducted by Suparta in 2017.

In 2008, the province’s Cultural Agency issued Guidelines for the Preservation and Development of Javanese Language and Literature (Endraswara, Widayat, & Santosa, 2008). These guidelines include an explanation of the importance of preserving Javanese language and literature as well as strategies that all Yogyakarta institutions must implement. The Javanese language has been a required component of the local content curriculum, or muatan lokal, which has been realized in all elementary and secondary public and private schools in the province since 2013 (Sulaikha & Santosa, 2020; Suwondo, 2019). However, because the actual Javanese language lesson only occurs once per week, the local content curriculum has had little impact on the Javanese language practice of the students. Many of them have found it difficult to learn the language; as a result, it is common for schools to emphasize the study of Javanese culture rather than language practice.

Despite their lack of enthusiasm for learning Javanese, many local students claim to use it in their daily lives. According to Udasmoro et al. (2023) in a survey of elementary, junior high, and high school students aged 10 to 17 years in Yogyakarta’s five territorial units, 78.48 percent of 330 respondents claimed to use Javanese ngoko in their day-to-day interactions. However, only 16 percent reported using krama madya, and only 2.73 percent reported using the krama inggil register. Udasmoro et al. discovered that Javanese krama is used more in rural areas in Bantul and Gunung Kidul regencies than in other areas, at two percent (Udasmoro et al., 2023).

The majority of studies on the Javanese language focus on its use in physical social environments, whereas numerous individuals and communities have worked to preserve the Javanese language through traditional and social media, art, etc. These groups have their own audiences. Singer-songwriter Didi Kempot’s body of work, for instance, utilizes more Javanese than Indonesian, attracting a large number of young and old, Javanese and
non-Javanese fans. Moreover, a variety of Javanese-language programs have been aired by radio and television stations across the province as part of an effort to increase the language's appeal to the younger generations. TV Jogja, a local television station, broadcasts programs designed to preserve the Javanese language and culture, including Pawartos Ngayogyakarta (news), Adiluhung (traditional ceremonies), and wayang or shadow puppet shows. In addition, a number of local groups have hopped on the social media bandwagon to spread primarily humorous content in Javanese.

The question then is to what extent young people in Yogyakarta actually access these media and are exposed to Javanese content. This study also focuses on the extent that the younger generations in Yogyakarta apply Javanese on social media. To narrow the scope, the researchers investigated the access to and use of Javanese in mass media, including television, radio, newspapers, and social media, among Yogyakarta youth aged 10 to 17 years. Due to the fact that children and adolescents in Indonesia spend a considerable amount of time on (social) media, it is crucial to examine how the constant flow of information affects their exposure to Javanese on various platforms as well as their use of the language on social media. The findings can be used to promote the use of Javanese in the Special Region of Yogyakarta Province through the implementation of policies.

For the purpose of this report, the name "Yogyakarta" is used interchangeably with "the Special Region of Yogyakarta" to refer to the province, while "Yogyakarta" the city is always mentioned as "Yogyakarta City."

Methodology

This study utilized the survey method. Up to 330 elementary, junior high, and senior high school students from the Special Region of Yogyakarta's five territorial units — Sleman Regency, Gunung Kidul Regency, Bantul Regency, Kulon Progo Regency, and Yogyakarta City — participated in the survey, with between 60 and 71 participants in each area. The survey included both public and private schools in rural and urban areas, a decision made in consideration of the diverse social backgrounds of the students. To narrow the age gap between respondents, the elementary students were all in fifth grade at the time of the survey, while the junior and senior high school students were in second grade.

The survey questions pertain to the use of Javanese ngoko and krama in the domestic sphere (at home) and in the public sphere (peers or neighbors), with parents, teachers, schoolmates, and other friendship circles serving as independent variables. In addition, their relationship to the use of Javanese in the media was addressed. The questions posed pertained to the manner in which the individuals utilized the Javanese language, namely the krama and ngoko registers, and a combination of the two, in both face-to-face communication and on WhatsApp. The survey results were compiled into a pivot table to observe patterns, trends, and comparisons between variables in the usage of Javanese language in both ngoko and krama registers. To further validate these patterns, three respondents were selected through sampling and across different levels of education, to be interviewed and undergo a verbal test. The verbal ability test assessed the respondents' proficiency in oral Javanese language usage, their capability in composing structured Javanese language, and their vocabulary knowledge. The results of the interviews were used to create an argumentative framework that reinforces the analysis of the observed patterns and comparisons.

Results and Discussion

Access to and Usage of Javanese in Media among Yogyakarta Children and Adolescents

Social media use is widespread among Indonesia's younger generations, including children and adolescents. According to a 2022 research published by the Indonesian Ministry of Communication and Informatics, 98 percent of Indonesian youth (10 to 19 years old) from various regions understand what the internet
is and how it works, and 79.5 percent actively use it (Akbar, 2019; Harahap & Adeni, 2020; KOMINFO, 2022). This indicates that a huge number of Indonesian youths are not only familiar with the internet but also use it frequently. The research’s specific context is the internet as a tool for nationwide online education of schoolchildren during the Covid-19 pandemic. In March 2022, the pandemic began to spread in Indonesia, necessitating a switch from face-to-face to online delivery for all formal educational activities (Udasmoro & Rahmawati, 2021).

Furthermore, Suhartono, the Head of the Indonesian Ministry of Manpower’s Data and Information Center, claims that 90.61 percent of the country’s 143 million young people use the internet for social media and social networking (see Ariyanti, 2018), while 52.28 percent of teenagers use the internet for entertainment, such as watching movies and listening to music. Meanwhile, 78.89 percent of internet users of the younger generation use it to get information, such as news from online newspapers, and 31.12 percent use it to help them do homework.

Among the supporting factors contributing to the increased usage of social media among young people is the fact that almost every one of them currently has access to the internet, either through smartphones or computers (Dhammathattariya, Songkram, Visesuvanapoom, & Priomsopa, 2021). With this accessibility, children and adolescents can easily access social media without incurring significant expenses. Additionally, younger people today tend to be more reliant on technology compared to previous generations (Onyeaka, Romero, Healy, & Celano, 2021). They utilize social media as a means of communication, sharing information, and accessing entertainment. They are more likely to consume content in the form of videos or images rather than written text. Social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok, and YouTube enable them to access content that aligns with their interests. In terms of connectivity, social media allows these younger people to connect online with their friends, both near and far. All of these factors make young individuals more likely to be actively engaged in using social media compared to previous generations (Tammisalo, Danielsbacka, Andersson, & Tanskanen, 2022).

According to the data presented above, many young Indonesians today are digital natives who are inextricably linked to the media and the internet in their daily lives. Because of their high level of media access, they have many platforms to communicate and consume various content. In interaction through media, a speaker communicates in accordance with the situational context of the interlocutor (Yohanna, 2020). This context is related to the relationship between the speaker and the interlocutor, which elicits self-identity. Social media identity is how an individual represents themselves on social media platforms. This includes information they provide about themselves, such as name, age, location, and profile picture, as well as the content they post, such as status updates, photos, and videos (Elsayed, 2021). Social media identity can differ from one’s real-life identity and may evolve over time (Huang, Kumar, & Hu, 2021).

This identity may also be reflected in their communication style and the topics they discuss. For example, in language usage, individuals tend to use a more relaxed and informal style when communicating with their close connections, and often even use their native language. In this regard, many young people in Yogyakarta use Javanese language on social media.

The utilization of the Javanese language in social media settings diverges from its utilization in direct interactions or formal contexts. In essence, the use of the Javanese language on social media must consider ethical and situational parameters. This stems from the fact that the terminology or phrases utilized on social media may not align with the pertinent context, thus, speakers must exercise caution to avoid offending others or causing harm (Watie, 2016). This is one of the reasons why younger generations often choose to communicate using Indonesian or English on social media platforms. A niche for Javanese content exists somewhere in this vast network of possibilities. Thus, the access of Yogyakarta children and adolescents to
Javanese content on the internet, as well as their use of Javanese on social media, should be investigated in order to determine the extent to which these youngsters use Javanese actively or passively.

Out of the 330 respondents who were asked how frequently they use Javanese on social media, 54.5 percent (180 respondents) said they do it occasionally. Meanwhile, at 21.8 percent, the 72 respondents who said they always used Javanese on social media are nearly at balance with those who said they never used Javanese on social media (23.6 percent). This claim of always using Javanese on social media could indicate that the respondents in question never combined Javanese with other languages, or that they occasionally mixed Javanese with other languages such as Indonesian and English. In any case, the level of Javanese usage on social media by Yogyakarta youth remains quite high.

The table below displays the frequency with which elementary, middle, and high school students in the Special Region of Yogyakarta use Javanese on social media.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Javanese Usage on Social Media</th>
<th>TERRITORIAL UNITS</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Bantul</td>
<td>Gunung Kidul</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Occasionally</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Always</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td></td>
<td>60</td>
<td>63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to the table above, most respondents said they utilized Javanese on social media on occasion. Only in Kulon Progo did the percentages of respondents who chose "never," "sometimes," and "always" level out at 32.4 percent (23 respondents), 36.6 percent (26 respondents), and 30.9 percent (22 respondents). Furthermore, if the territorial units are divided into more rural or more urban categories, it is fascinating to note the unique discoveries that emerge. The second most common response for the frequency of Javanese usage on social media in the more urban Yogyakarta City and Sleman Regency is "never," whereas the second highest choice in the other, more rural territorial units is "always."

The prevalence of the Javanese language is often lower in urban areas in comparison to rural areas. This disparity is due to the demographic and cultural differences between the two areas. Urban areas tend to have a more diverse population with residents from various regions and backgrounds (Zaman, 2022), resulting in less frequent use of Javanese. Furthermore, higher levels of education and urbanization in urban areas tend to drive the use of Indonesian or foreign languages such as English. However, in rural areas, the population is more homogeneous and typically uses Javanese as their primary language. Additionally, rural communities are known to respect and preserve their traditional cultures and languages (Xu, Zhang, & Tian, 2017), making Javanese more commonly used.

According to the data shown above, the use of the Javanese language among elementary, junior high, and senior high school students is quite moderate, particularly on social media. The use of Javanese depends on the individual's proficiency with the language. Nonetheless, a significant portion of urban residents may never utilize Javanese, not even on the Internet. This is a result of the inflow of new settlers from outside of Yogyakarta, who have dominated both Sleman Regency and Yogyakarta City. Meanwhile, there appears to be a great deal more room for active Javanese language conservation in rural areas. The
presence of older generations who speak Javanese on a daily basis in these areas has fostered a habitus for Javanese preservation, allowing for its strategic transmission to future generations (Pratama, Iqbal, & Tarigan, 2019). Because of the impact of economic advancement, educational pursuits, and population migration, people in urban areas use the Javanese language to a lesser extent than rural areas. Major city residents often come from diverse backgrounds and speak Indonesian as their primary language. Furthermore, education in urban areas is frequently taught in Indonesian (Nur’aeni, Kusnur’aeni, & Priyanto, 2019), resulting in greater fluency in the language among the youth compared to Javanese. On the other hand, in rural areas, the Javanese language remains widely used as the primary mode of communication in daily life.

Despite the predominance of social media among younger generations, respondents said that they continued to watch television and listen to the radio, but to a lesser extent. In the 1980s and 1990s, when many Indonesians did not own television sets, radio programs were easily available. At the time, numerous radio stations in Java aired various radio dramas in the Javanese language as prime-time programming. Later, in the late 1990s and early 2000s, television overtook radio as the dominant medium. It is worth noting that during this period, the comedy troupe Srimulat popularized the Javanese theatrical genre ketoprak via television. After the arrival of digital technology, new media platforms emerged on the Internet, allowing each user to have a more individualized experience.

When asked about their frequency in accessing Javanese-language programs on television and/or radio, the respondents’ responses differed greatly from their responses to the question about social media. As many as 179 respondents (54.2 percent) said they had never watched or listened to either Javanese television or radio programs, while 142 individuals (43 percent) indicated that they occasionally tune in to Javanese-language television and/or radio programs. Finally, only nine people (2.7 percent) indicated that they always watch or listen to Javanese television or radio programs. The following table depicts the frequency with which respondents access television and radio programming.

Table 2. Frequency of Access to Javanese-Language Television and/or Radio Programs among Yogyakarta Youth

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Access to Javanese-Language Television and/or Radio Programs</th>
<th>Bantul</th>
<th>Gunung Kidul</th>
<th>Yogyakarta City</th>
<th>Kulon Progo</th>
<th>Sleman</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Occasionally</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Always</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>330</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The above table demonstrates, upon close inspection, that there are no significant differences between the figures provided by respondents in each area. The responses to "occasionally" and "never" are nearly equivalent. However, compared to the other areas, the proportion of Sleman Regency respondents who answered "never" is the highest, at 57.7 percent (41 respondents). Those who said they tuned in to Javanese-language television and/or radio programs on a daily basis could only be found in Bantul, Yogyakarta City, and Kulon Progo, albeit in very small numbers, with less than five people in each area.
The presence of Javanese language on television is limited due to various factors. One of the key contributors is the larger viewership for Indonesian language TV shows as Indonesian is the official language spoken by a vast majority of the Indonesian population, thereby making TV content in Indonesian more reachable to a larger audience (Trijanto, 2019). Additionally, TV audiences have a tendency to prefer more entertaining shows such as dramas, comedies, and reality shows, as opposed to traditional Javanese language programming. While Javanese language TV programs can still be found and are well-received in certain regions of East and Central Java (Susanto & Sandi, 2020), they are less prevalent on a national level.

There are numerous ways to interpret the fact that only nine respondents (2.7 percent) said they always accessed Javanese-language programming on television and/or radio. First, it is possible that television and radio are no longer popular among the 10 to 17-year-old demographic. Second, the internet habitus, which correlates with advancements in information technology in the country, may have facilitated internet accessibility. Thirdly, the internet is more appealing to children and adolescents than other platforms because it is a more personal medium that them to express themselves more actively. It is safe to say that children and adolescents born after the year 2000 have embraced social media as their digital world and have had much less access to television and radio than previous generations. Despite their extensive use of social media, these younger generations, particularly the youth of Yogyakarta, have not taken advantage of the platform to practice Javanese. The new media have enabled children and adolescents to digitally step out of their immediate surroundings and explore a significantly larger world.

The following table provides data regarding the frequency with which respondents read Javanese-language content in electronic or print media.

**Table 3. Frequency of Reading Javanese-Language Content on Various Media among Yogyakarta Youth**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Frequency of Reading Content in Javanese</th>
<th>Bantul</th>
<th>Gunung Kidul</th>
<th>Yogyakarta City</th>
<th>Kulon Progo</th>
<th>Sleman</th>
<th>TOTAL</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Never</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>142</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Occasionally</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Always</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td></td>
<td>60</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>330</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

According to the table above, 170 respondents (51.5 percent) said they read written Javanese content occasionally, while 142 of them (43.5 percent) said they had never read written Javanese content in the media. Only 18 respondents (5.4 percent) said they read Javanese-language content on a daily basis. In the context of internet use, because the flow of information in the country’s cyberspace is dominated by Indonesian, a lack of access to written Javanese content appears unavoidable. There is a structure in place to ensure that the exposure of Indonesian children and adolescents to written online content is dominated by the national language.

The diminishing familiarity with the Javanese language among the younger generations is influenced by the prominence of Indonesian as the primary language of instruction in Indonesia’s education system (Nur’aeni et al., 2019). Indonesian language is widely used in most schools and universities, thus, younger generations are more proficient in this language than Javanese. Furthermore, the advancements in technology and the widespread use of social media have altered
the way in which young people consume information and entertainment. The preference for video or image-based content over written material has contributed to a decreased interest in reading Javanese language writing. Additionally, the influence of global culture has led to a younger generation's interest in foreign content (Raikhan, Moldakhmet, Ryskeldy, & Alua, 2014), further diminishing their interest in Javanese language writing.

According to the data presented above, the distribution of children’s and adolescents’ access to written content in the media, particularly online, appears to be fairly uniform across the areas. This indicates that the five territorial units share similar media and content consumption patterns, most likely as a result of their proximity.

Conclusion

The explanation regarding the access of children and adolescents aged 10 to 17 years to the Javanese language through the media leads to the conclusion that there are still spaces for them to access Javanese on the various platforms. They are aware of the availability of Javanese-language content in both traditional and new media. However, their preferred space, namely social media, is still dominated by the use of the Indonesian language, making Javanese content much more limited. The frequency with which these Yogyakarta youth access media content in Javanese, as well as their use of Javanese on social media, indicate that their access to Javanese-language media content, albeit limited, exists.

The spaces that are still available for them to access Javanese-language content, such as television and radio, are seldom visited. There is a structure in place that enables them to access and utilize Javanese, but it is not the structure they adhere to; rather, it is the structure adopted by previous generations, such as their parents.

To increase the exposure of children and adolescents to Javanese-language media content, its availability must be increased, preferably in large quantities. The social media are an essential platform for promoting the use of Javanese among the younger generation, with the stipulation that their use of this space must align with their individual interests.

References


