
The Family Language Policy of Javanese Multilingual Families

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Abstract

Javanese is one of the regional languages with a relatively large number of speakers, around 68 million. This significant number of speakers is essential for the Javanese language to survive. Even so, the popularity of the Javanese language tends to decrease, especially among young people. This decline is influenced by various factors. One of them is that young families no longer introduce Javanese as the primary means of communication within the family. This study is interested in identifying the language attitudes of parents in Javanese families who are bilingual towards Indonesian, English, and Javanese. Furthermore, this study aims to analyze how the language policy is implemented in the family. This study combines quantitative and qualitative approaches using data collection techniques through questionnaires, interviews, and participatory observation. Data analysis shows that parents have positive language attitudes towards Indonesian and English. However, their language attitude towards Javanese is not as positive as Indonesian and English. This language attitude is reflected in the implementation of language policies in families where parents prefer to apply mixed language policies.

Keywords: *Javanese; language attitude; language policy; multilingual*

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Introduction

Indonesian is rich in regional languages. The Language Development and Fostering Agency (Bahasa, 2023), in the language map (<https://petabahasa.kemdikbud.go.id/>), states that 718 regional languages have been validated. Javanese is one of the Indonesian regional languages whose relatively significant number of speakers (Suryadi, Subroto, &

Marmanto, 2014; Hadiwijaya, Kinanti, & Puspitasari, 2022). However, the number of Javanese speakers is decreasing. Sindo (2017) reported that based on the data presented by Ethnologue 2017, the number of Javanese speakers is around 84.3 million. Meanwhile, the data published by Ethnologue in 2022 state that the number of speakers is 68.2 million people. Based on these data, the number of Javanese speakers decreased by 22 million

people within five years.

If it continuously decreases and is consistent with the same number, the decrease in the number of Javanese speakers will significantly affect the vitality of the Javanese language. As stated by Mufwene (2017), the population size of speakers is one of the causes of language loss because the minority may not stand up to the pressure from the numerically dominant population. If the decreasing population of Javanese is not prevented, this has the potential to result in the extinction of the Javanese language, which is certainly not expected to occur.

Studies related to the preservation of the Javanese language have been the focus of many researchers. Udasmoro et al (2023) map the vulnerability of the Javanese Language in the Special Region of Yogyakarta. They found that Javanese *krama* and *krama inggil* experience vulnerability. Another research was conducted by Setiya et al. (2019) who tried to analyze the preservation of the Javanese language in the digital era. The results show that although there is a tendency for the decline of the Javanese language, people are still eager to use the Javanese language and preserve the language.

There are many factors influencing this decline, including globalization, multi-ethnic marriages, policies on the use of the national language, and education policies. The decline of a language in a particular area may also be influenced by migration as supported by Qiu and Qiu (2022) who state that urbanization may also change the linguistic landscape of particular areas. Furthermore, Crystal, as quoted by Ikoba and Jolayemi, highlights the importance of using the indigenous language at home as a critical component of its survival. He also adds that language transmission between generations is another critical factor (Ikoba & Jolayemi, 2020).

In previous research, researchers found that parents tend not to choose regional languages to be introduced as the mother tongue for their children or to use as the main language in communication in the family domain (Fitriati & Wardani, 2020). Young families prefer to use Indonesian in everyday

communication. This tendency has attracted the interest of researchers to conduct more in-depth research on the language attitudes of parents in multilingual Javanese families towards Indonesian, English, and Javanese, as well as the application of language policies in these families.

Several researchers have studied language attitudes and language policies. Efendi (2020) explores parents' language attitudes toward bilingualism, identifies the contribution of these language attitudes to language policy in the family, and examines efforts to maintain the inherited language. Efendi concluded that the national language is far more important than the language inherited from the family. Efendi identified that language status, social institutions, relations in the community, and family structure influence that language policy. In addition, Efendi (2020) also said that the maintenance of the inherited language is more symbolic than strategic and related to a sense of kinship.

Language policy in the family is also the focus of Sahri's research. In his research, Sahri (2019) identified how bilingual families in the Langsa area, Aceh, determine the language policy in their family and identify the factors that influence the language policy chosen. Sahri stated that the Putong Birem group did not implement a policy to maintain and use their local language within the family or communicate in their surroundings. Two factors were found that influenced the language policy. The first factor is the ideology and parental use of language, while the second is children and language use.

This study is similar to previous studies in terms of research topics, namely language attitudes and policies. However, this research focuses more on parents' language attitudes towards Indonesian, English, and Javanese. In addition, the object of this study is also different from previous studies because this research analyzes Javanese multilingual families.

Language attitudes are a set of beliefs, feelings, and behavioral intentions toward different language varieties (Li & Wei, 2022). Language attitudes play a significant role in

identity construction, language maintenance, and language planning and policy. It has been recognized that positive or negative attitudes to a language influence someone's behavior and perceptions of the language.

Another research was conducted by Tran et al. who investigated the family language policies of Vietnamese-Australian Families (2022). They applied mixed methods and collected the data via a questionnaire. It is identified that family language policy is an important element in home language maintenance. Four identified language policies are observable: using Vietnamese with the nuclear family, Vietnamese outside the nuclear family, English at home, and English outside the home. Parents' Vietnamese proficiency is one of the factors influencing the family language policy.

The present research is similar to what is done by Tran et al. in terms of the methods and the topic of the study. The difference is that the present research also analyzes the language attitude of the parents and the source of the data.

Holmes (2013, p. 409) states that language attitudes reflect attitudes toward users and the use of that language. People develop language attitudes that indicate their views of those who use that language and its context and function. Holmes further explained that many factors could influence a person's language attitude. Intelligence, social, and political factors significantly affect a person's language attitude (2013, p. 410).

Language attitudes are also related to people's perspectives on a language and their evaluation (Dweik & Qawar, 2015). Society develops positive or negative attitudes toward specific languages based on how society identifies and labels those languages. A language becomes attractive to people with a positive attitude toward it. Conversely, people will not be interested in using a particular language if they have a negative attitude toward that language.

In a bi/multilingual society, people can choose the language to communicate, affecting the vitality of language in that society.

Meyerhof said that the existing languages have different vitality in a multilingual situation. In multilingual settings, various languages exhibit different vigor across different domains, whether they are institutional, social, or personal. The selection of a particular language carries interactional force or suggests something about the context or the interlocutors. One language may be employed for some social functions or in a specific social context, while another language is used for other functions and contexts (Meyerhoff, 2006, p. 103).

In a good and balanced multilingual situation, each existing language has a different usage area. However, if one language dominates and shifts the use of other languages, this can lead to a shift in language. If the intensity of the use of this shifted language decreases and is no longer passed on to the next generation, this language will experience extinction. An example of this situation is described by Idaryani and Fidyati who identified that the policy of Acehnese parents who choose only Indonesian as a mother tongue leads the children to be monolingual and as a result the use of Acehnese, their heritage language, keeps decreasing (2022).

Related to this, families have a strategic role in developing or losing a language since parents are responsible for passing on their inherited language to the next generation (Nupus & Riandi, 2021). Family and household have a significant effect on individual language patterns. The transmission of whether the heritage language is learned by children at home will influence the vitality of the heritage language (Lee & Way, 2016; Lewis & Simons, 2010; Bromham, Hua, Algy, & Meakins, 2020).

The choice of language to be used in communication is often a problem that is not easy for parents to decide. Ong outlines the various factors that influence the choice of language in a family. He stated that numerous challenges and hurdles arise, particularly in societies with multiple languages, where the availability of numerous languages creates dilemmas for families when deciding which languages to use within their families. Parents often struggle over ideological conflicts when selecting the appropriate language for their

children. They seek to preserve their cultural heritage and identity while also desiring their children's success in the wider society. Simultaneously, the policy and social media contribute to shaping parental choices. As a result, tension emerges between parental beliefs and concerns, set against the backdrop of a broader social and cultural context. This dilemma is inevitable. Parents shoulder the responsibility of striking a balance for their children between acquiring dominant languages and sacrificing their heritage language (Ong, 2021).

The family language policy is planning both implicitly and explicitly regarding the use of language for daily communication within the family. Schwartz (Schwartz, 2010) says that research on language policy includes three components: ideology, use, and management. Schwartz's opinion is in line with Spolsky's statement on the three components of language policy of a society: language practices which encompass the customary and recurring patterns of selecting from among the various linguistic varieties that make up its linguistic repertoire; the language beliefs or ideology which refers to the community's beliefs and perspectives regarding language and its usage; and any specific efforts aimed at altering or influencing the established language practices within the community through intervention, planning, and management (Spolsky, 2004).

Based on the explanation above, language policy in the family is quite complex and has a strategic role in maintaining language, especially the heritage language. Therefore, parents must be wise and have good judgment in deciding what language to use in family communication. Parents' language beliefs and attitudes will determine their children's language input and influence their language use.

This study aims to investigate the intricate relationship between parent language attitudes and family language policies of Javanese multilingual families. It uncovers how parents' perceptions shape language choice within the familial context. By examining the relationship between the language attitude, the family language policy, and the transmission of the

Javanese language this research seeks to offer valuable insights that foster a rich linguistic environment within families.

Methodology

Research on language attitudes and language policies is part of sociolinguistic studies. Holmes (2013, p. 1) states that a sociolinguistic expert examines the relationship between language and society. Analysis of the use of language in various social contexts provides information about how language works, social relations within a community, and how people construct multiple aspects of social identity through their language.

Furthermore, Yule (2006) says that sociolinguistics is closely related to various disciplines. It is connected with sociology through investigating the role language plays in the organization of social groups and institutions. Sociolinguistics is also tied to social psychology, particularly concerning how attitudes and perceptions are expressed and how behaviors are identified.

This research employed a sociolinguistic approach concerning social psychology to identify the language attitudes of Javanese parents and how these attitudes influence the family language policy. Furthermore, it combined quantitative and qualitative approaches. Angouri (2010) says that this mixed method contributes to a better understanding of the various phenomena studied. The quantitative approach helps generalize research results, while the qualitative approach helps provide in-depth and rich data. Through this mixed approach, it was expected that parents' language attitudes could be explored in depth and language policies in bi/multilingual Javanese families could be adequately identified.

The research data were collected through questionnaires that were sent to respondents who were selected using a purposive sampling technique, where respondents were determined based on the objectives of this study. The criteria used in the selection of respondents are: the parents are bi/multilingual with Javanese ethnicity and

have children aged less than 10 years.

Questions related to language attitudes are formulated as closed questions to make it easier for respondents to answer and narrow down the variety of answers. Each answer is scored from 1 (strongly disagree) to 4 (agree). Score 4 is the highest score indicating a positive attitude. Meanwhile, the lowest score indicating a negative attitude is 1. Apart from using questionnaires, the data were also collected through structured interviews and participatory observation.

This questionnaire was created using the Google form application and distributed via the WhatsApp platform and email to selected respondents in early February, and a total of 40 respondents were collected. Data collection through structured interviews was conducted on five families. The participatory observation of families was carried out after the questionnaires were collected. The participatory observation was carried out by recording communication activities in the selected respondent's families. This step was chosen to make the data collection process more effective and efficient.

The data analysis was first conducted by classifying the respondent's data based on ethnic background, education, occupation,

economy, and mastery of language. Next is scrutinizing the data related to respondents' language attitudes towards Javanese, Indonesian, and English. The Likert scale was used to calculate the data. The analysis was then sharpened based on the answers from the interviews. The last step is analyzing the language policy in the family by looking at the questionnaire answer data and the results of observations.

Results and Discussion

The first objective of this research is to identify the parents' language attitudes toward English, Indonesian, and Javanese. To obtain this objective, a detailed analysis of data was conducted. The analysis of the personal data of the respondents showed that 94% of the respondents came from the Javanese ethnic group and had a fairly good educational background. Economically, respondents have a well-established job and 67.5% have an income of more than five million rupiahs per month. In terms of language acquisition, 72.5% of respondents mastered Javanese as their mother tongue. In addition to mastering Javanese, the respondents also mastered Indonesian and English. The summary of the distribution of demographic data is presented in Table 1.

Table 1. Respondent demographic distribution

Ethnicity (M)	Javanese	38
	Non-Javanese	2
Ethnicity (F)	Jawa	37
	Non-Jawa	3
Education (M)	Senior High School	10
	Undergraduate	23
	Graduate	7
	Doctorate	1
Education (F)	Senior High School	10
	Undergraduate	22
	Graduate	8
Occupation (M)	Civil Servant	4
	Teacher/Lecturer	9
	Private Employee	14
	Businessman/woman	4
	Doctor/Nurse	1
	Others	8
Occupation (F)	Civil Servant	3
	Teacher/Lecturer	4
	Private Employee	17
	Businessman/woman	9

	Others	7
Family Income	< 5m	13
	5 - 10m	20
	>10m	7
Mother tongue (M)	Javanese	29
	Indonesia	11
Mother tongue (F)	Javanese	30
	Indonesia	9
	another regional language	1

There are differences in parents' language attitudes towards Javanese, Indonesian, and English. Parents have positive attitudes toward Indonesian and English. However, their language attitude toward Javanese is not as good as their attitude toward the other two languages.

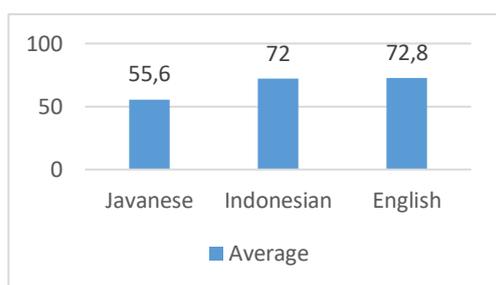


Figure 1. The language attitude

The calculations show that parents' attitude towards English is the highest, followed by attitudes towards Indonesian, and the lowest is towards Javanese. Javanese, Indonesian, and English are considered necessary in everyday life. Even so, in daily use, the dominance of the Indonesian language is evident. This situation is reasonable because Indonesian is the national standard language, and as mandated in Law no 24/2009, Indonesian must be prioritized and the standardization of the use of Indonesian has been in progress. Based on this Law, the use of Indonesian is obligatory in fourteen domains such as at schools, offices, and public places. The following chart illustrates the distribution of language use in everyday life.

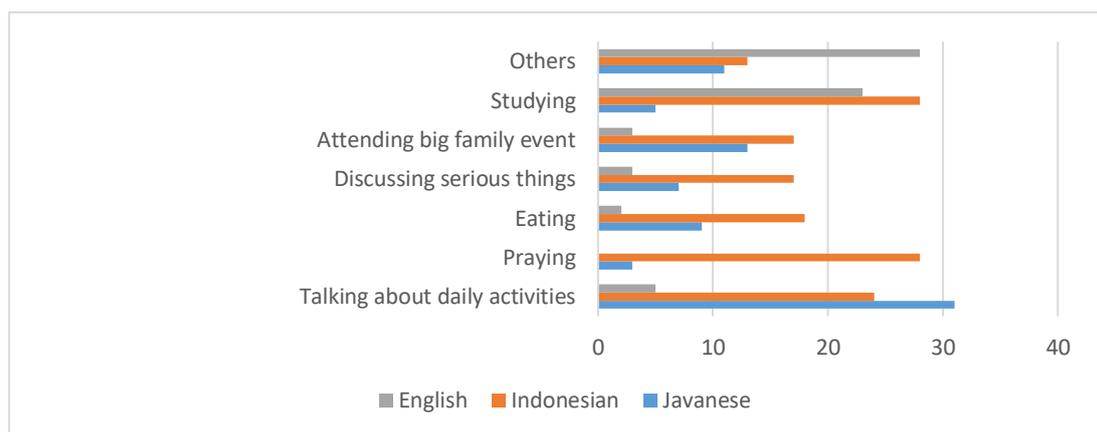


Figure 2. The language use distribution

Parents' language attitudes are reflected in the language used to communicate. Mastery of all three languages is considered essential. However, the knowledge of the Javanese language is considered not as crucial as the other two languages because Javanese is deemed to have less contribution to learning, working, and social status. Mastering Javanese will not increase their social prestige, which is different from mastering English. Significant use of Indonesian and English when studying and other things is in line with parents'

attitudes toward these two languages.

As can be seen in Figure 2, Indonesian is more often used for daily communication. The dominance of the Javanese language can be seen when the respondents talk about their daily activities with their family members. But, when they communicate with others outside the main family members, they use Indonesian.

The use of English is quite significant when they study or accompany their children

in learning and doing other activities such as watching movies and listening to music. Resources in English are easier to find and as a result, their children are more familiar with English children's songs and stories.

These findings support Meyerhoff's argument that in a multilingual setting, the existing languages may be employed for different domains which may influence the vitality of the language (Meyerhoff, 2006). The Indonesian language is dominant in the institutional, educational, social, and religious domains. English is mostly used in the entertainment and social media domains, while Javanese is used in the family domain. The less intense use of Javanese makes it the least popular among the three languages, a similar case to what happens to Acehnese (Idaryani & Fidyati, 2022).

Although parents' language attitudes toward Javanese are not as positive as their attitudes toward Indonesian and English, 50% of the respondents still consider it essential for their children to master Javanese. They believe this is necessary to remind children of their identity as part of the Javanese, and they want to teach politeness through the use of Javanese

krama. It supports the argument that language attitude plays an important role in constructing someone's identity (Li & Wei, 2022).

Mastery of Indonesian and English opens more significant opportunities for their children to seek knowledge and to find a job in the world of work. In the structured interview, one of the respondents said that Indonesian and English domination in learning activities is due to the educational curriculum; these two languages received more time allocation. It is also easier for parents to find Indonesian and English literacy resources than those in Javanese.

97% of respondents think mastering more than one language is necessary for the future. They also consider that it is essential to implement policies on the use of language in the family. This attitude is reflected in the distribution of language policies within the family, summarized in Table 2. The policy to use mixed language in daily communication is the choice of 87.5% of respondents. 52.5% of the respondents used a mixture of Javanese and Indonesian, while the other 35% used a mix of Javanese, Indonesian, and English.

Table 2. The Implementation of the Family Language Policy

No	Family Language Policy	Amount
1	Each parent has one language (communication with the father uses Indonesian, and contact with the mother uses Javanese or vice versa).	1
2	Use Javanese to communicate with family members at home and Indonesian to communicate with others.	3
3	Use Indonesian to communicate with family members at home and with others outside the home.	2
4	Use a mixture of Javanese and Indonesian in daily communication with family members and others outside the home.	21
5	Use English in everyday communication.	0
6	Use a mixture of Javanese, Indonesian, and English in daily communication.	14

In everyday language, the respondents chose to apply a mixed language policy, either by mixing Javanese with Indonesian or the three languages. This policy was widely chosen because parents deemed it necessary to expose their children to various language choices so that they become multilingual. Multilingual ability is believed to improve brain function. In addition, being multilingual will make it easier for children to participate simultaneously in various cultural and language activities.

Factors that encourage parents to choose a mixed language policy are mixed marriages, family structure, and the surrounding environment. In diverse marriages where one of the parties does not speak Javanese, parents prefer to use Indonesian, although sometimes they still use Javanese. In the mixed language policy, the use of Indonesian is dominant. This policy is influenced by parents' attitudes toward the Indonesian language (Holmes, 2013; Dweik & Qawar, 2015; Ong, 2021).

Family structure and the surrounding environment are also one of the factors that influence language policy in the family. One of the respondents who was observed and interviewed said that the family first tried to implement the one-language policy, namely only using Javanese in communicating with the family members. However, this policy lasted only one year because relatives and neighbors outside the nuclear family often used Indonesian to share with them. This situation makes it difficult for them to stick with the one-language policy.

Limited sources of reference in Javanese and exposure to Javanese also cause parents to override the use of Javanese. Today it is easier for parents to access English learning resources than Javanese ones. One of the respondents preferred to introduce their children to English because they could easily access learning resources in English. Therefore, their children are more familiar with English vocabulary.

One family applies different policies to the children. When the parents communicate with the older kids, they apply the mixed language policy in which they mix Indonesian and Javanese. Meanwhile, when they communicate with the youngest son, they apply a mix of Indonesian and English. The parents switch directly to Indonesian when they talk to the son. The parents consider that Javanese is difficult to learn and the exposure to this language is less than Indonesian and English. It will be more beneficial if the son can master Indonesian and English.

The analysis results show that educational factors also influence family language policies. Parents who choose the policy for using a mixture of Javanese, Indonesian, and English are those with undergraduate education and above and who mastered Javanese, Indonesian, and English either actively or passively.

Based on the analysis of the language attitude and the family language policy, it can be identified that there is a relationship between language attitudes, the application of language policies in the family, and language use. Though parents consider it essential for their children to master Javanese, in daily communication they do not prioritize the use of

Javanese. Of course, this is a challenge for observers of regional language preservation to encourage parents to continue prioritizing the use of Javanese since families shoulder a crucial role in the preservation of heritage languages (Bromham, Hua, Algy, & Meakins, 2020; Lee & Way, 2016; Lewis & Simons, 2010; Nupus & Riandi, 2021; Ong, 2021).

Conclusion

This study delved into the complex relationship between language attitudes and family language policies, throwing light on the various factors that influence language choices within households. The findings underline the significant role that parent perceptions play in shaping language preferences and practices. Positive language attitudes are closely connected to family language policies which prioritize the use of Indonesian and English. Meanwhile, the less positive attitude towards the Javanese language leads to the decline of its transmission.

This research reveals the impact of parental attitudes on the development of their children's language. Parents who value the Javanese language more positively are more likely to ensure the continued use and transmission of the Javanese language to their children. Meanwhile, generally, it can be seen that the Javanese language is less popular and the use of it among family members is decreasing. These insights urge families, educators, and policymakers to promote positive language attitudes toward the Javanese language and the implementation of a family language policy that encourages the use of Javanese.

For further research, the writer would like to suggest that other researchers have a broader scope of study and more respondents to be observed. Considering the fact of the declining use of Javanese the writer also would like to encourage Javanese families, communities, educational institutions, and governments to collaborate and foster a linguistic landscape that encourages linguistic diversity and preserves the Javanese language.

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