

# Phenomenon Shifting Mother Tongue in Indonesia

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## Abstract

This study is motivated by the phenomenon of mother language shift in Indonesia. Therefore, this study aims to describe the causes of the phenomenon of mother language shift in Indonesia. This research method uses literature review. The research results show that the role of parents in the family and school is a factor causing the shift of regional languages as the mother tongue used by the current generation of speakers.

## Introduction

The term mother tongue is used in Indonesia with the meaning of the first language that humans master from birth through interaction with fellow members of their linguistic community such as family and the local community (KBBI Online). The term mother tongue is also used internationally, such as first language, native language, native tongue and mother tongue. Native language or mother tongue refers to the dialect of a particular tribe and is not a person's first language. A person's mother tongue can be expressed by their fluency in using that language (Davies, 2003).

The mother tongue of Indonesians is the regional language attached to their tribe. For example, the mother tongue in West Java Province is Sundanese because the population is Sundanese. There can be more than one mother tongue in each province because it is adjusted to the number of tribes in that province. However, this condition has changed over time.

The first language of people in Indonesia has shifted. In general, currently, regional languages as first languages are only acquired by a handful of people. This is as found by Bhakti (2020) in his research carried out in Sleman Regency. The finding is that regional languages are no longer often used as first languages (mother tongue) but Indonesian is often used (Bhakti, 2020).

Indonesian is present among Indonesian people as a unifier of the nation. It was Indonesian that contributed to the success of the struggle to achieve independence which was announced on October 28 1928 through the Youth Pledge. Indonesian people only needed 17 years to achieve independence after the Youth Pledge was declared.

The Ministry of Education and Culture's Language Development and Development Agency (Widyanto, 2018) has mapped and verified 652 regional languages in Indonesia. This number may change over time. The presence of the Indonesian language has become a hero for the Indonesian people. Even though Indonesian people come from various ethnicities and languages, they can still communicate thanks to the Indonesian language. Regional languages are still used by the community as their first language, especially within the family. When they reach school age, Indonesian is then studied as a second language so that Indonesian society becomes a bilingual society. In fact, when English is also studied at school as an international language, Indonesian society becomes a multilingual society.

However, as time goes by regional languages as mother tongues shift their role. Some of them even lost their speakers. This is what causes some mother tongues to become extinct over time because their speakers no longer exist. Therefore, the author is interested in studying the shift in mother tongue that occurred in Indonesia based on previous research.

Language shifts occur due to the existence of other languages that individuals, families or communities decide to use in communicating. This decision was based on the consideration that the language chosen was prestigious, dominant and straightforward (Coulmas, 2005).

### **Method Study**

This research uses the literature study method. The data sources used come from research that has been conducted by other people and published in the form of scientific articles in scientific journals. The collection technique was carried out by searching data from Google Scholar. The data is then selected and then analyzed.

### **Research Results and Discussion**

#### **Research Result**

Research on regional languages as mother tongues in Indonesia has been widely carried out by researchers from Indonesia. Based on search results on Google Scholar, the following research was found.

1. Hamida Research (2011)

Hamida researched eight families to obtain a description of family values in maintaining regional languages and how the values held by the families influence language policies and practices in the family? As a result, there were two families who specifically thought that maintaining the Javanese language was not important.

The parent of one of the families studied was a teacher. He witnessed children whose first language was Javanese experiencing difficulties in learning at school. Therefore, he decided to give Indonesian as the first language for his children.

However, all parents from the eight families studied felt it was important to socialize Javanese to their children from an early age. This is because parents believe Javanese is part of Javanese culture.

There are three patterns of parents introducing their children's first language. First, the first language given to their children is Javanese. The reason they introduced Javanese as their first language was as an effort to maintain Javanese cultural identity which must be passed on to the next generation from generation to generation. Second, the first language given to their children is Indonesian. Parents choose Indonesian as the first language for their children because they think Indonesian is more important, especially since they often communicate with people who are not Javanese. They also feel comfortable using Indonesian when interacting with their children or with other people. Third, the first languages given to their children are Javanese and Indonesian. Those who use Indonesian and Javanese in daily conversations are used to the patterns that their parents have given them so that these patterns are also passed on to their children (Hamida, 2011).

## 2. Setyawan Research (2011)

Setyawan in his research found that language shifts were initiated by the speakers themselves who viewed and positioned the language as a means of communication, not as part of culture that was important to preserve. Without realizing it, this behavior causes the number of native language speakers to decrease until finally no one speaks it anymore.

If language is only used for its function, it is very easy for the language to shift. Regional languages in a linguistic perspective emphasize the function of regional languages as a choice of language that can be used appropriately by considering the situation and conditions that occur.

Indonesian society is a bilingual society. This is because Indonesian society consists of various ethnicities and languages. As many as 726 out of 746 languages are threatened with extinction. The reason is that younger generation speakers do not use it. There are only 13 remaining regional languages (2011 data taken from Kompas (Setyawan, 2011)) which have more than one million speakers. These languages are Javanese, Sundanese, Batak, Balinese, Bugis, Madurese, Minang, Rejang Lebong, Lampung, Makassar, Banjar, Bima and Sasak. Javanese has the largest number of speakers in Indonesia.

The pattern found by Setyawan regarding the Javanese language shift process was starting from Javanese krama, ngoko, then Indonesian. The Javanese krama language is mastered by older people. The younger generation dominates the Javanese ngoko language until in the end they prefer to use Indonesian. The reason is that the role of parents has not been maximized in making Javanese become the mother tongue within the family.

## 3. Mardikantoro Research (2012)

Mardikantoro found that the Javanese language used by the Samin people had shifted from Javanese ngoko to Javanese krama (Mardikantoro, 2012). This aims to respect the speaking partner. Apart from that, the Javanese language used by the Samin people has changed its function. In the past, the Javanese language served to fight colonialists as a means of communication. Currently, this function has become purely a communication tool that emphasizes mutual respect, so that from Javanese ngoko it has changed to Javanese krama.

4. Putri Research (2018)

Putri discovered the fact through her research that speakers of Pepadun and Saibatin as mother tongues in Lampung Province became the language of communication within a limited circle of relatives such as at home, in native villages, during traditional deliberations. Lampung society is heterogeneous and dominated by immigrants, so the language used in everyday life is Indonesian. Defense efforts are still focused on the realm of education (Putri, 2018).

5. Bhakti Research (2020)

Bhakti found families in Sleman using informal Indonesian. In Indonesian, what they showed was that there was code switching and code mixing. The causal factors are the level of family education. Families whose members attend school or receive education are required to be able to speak Indonesian as the language of instruction in the world of education. Therefore, they learn to be fluent in Indonesian. Second, choose language that is straightforward and polite in the family. The principle of language use in Sleman is that it is recommended to use ethics in accordance with their traditions. Language etiquette in the Javanese tradition is called uploading language. In fact, the people are accustomed to using ngoko or neutral Javanese without a lexicon of manners. Therefore, they chose to use Indonesian but used uploaded language. Third, the age of family members. Husband and wife in families under 50 years old tend to use Indonesian. They have difficulty using Javanese. Fourth, social stratification of the family. The prestige of Indonesian is considered higher than regional languages. It is not surprising that societies with high social stratification choose to use Indonesian. Fifth, the lack of Javanese language learning for families. Regional languages have a small share in the area of formal education. Apart from that, parents at home do not have the ability to teach Javanese in depth to their children. Sixth, family residential areas. Urban areas use Indonesian more often than rural areas. Seventh, family attitudes towards language. Indonesian is considered a prestigious language so that people whose stratification is upper or upper middle class will choose Indonesian as the first language for their children.

6. Mustikasari and Astuti Research (2020)

Based on the results of research conducted by Mustikasari and Astuti (2020) in kindergartens and play groups, it was found that school, socio-economic status, migration, and family multilingualism had a significant direct influence on the shift in Javanese language use. The language learned and used in kindergartens and

playgroups will influence their language skills as adults. This is because they are in the sensitive period for learning language consciously. When children do not learn Javanese in their school environment, especially if children do not learn Javanese in their family, the child does not get Javanese as their mother tongue. Families in modern society use more than one language to communicate with their family members. A family that uses multilingualism is understood as the first language for its children. From birth, children acquire multilingualism as their first language. This is what causes a shift in Javanese language in children (Mustikasari & Astuti, 2020).

### **Discussion**

The study of regional language shifts in Indonesia will be discussed from two points of view. The following is the discussion.

#### 1. Regional Language Shift Seen from a Family Perspective

Not all families in Indonesia consider regional languages important. Not all families who consider it important make regional languages the first language for their family members. These two phenomena make the position of regional languages in society threatened with extinction. This is what caused 726 regional languages to become extinct, leaving only 13 regional languages which still have more than one million speakers.

The decision of parents to give a regional language as the first language for their children has a significant impact on the maintenance of regional languages in Indonesia. Parents and their past experiences as children influence their decision to choose their first language. Apart from that, parents' beliefs regarding regional languages as the cultural roots of each tribe influence their decision to use regional languages as their first language.

The first language acquired by children through family education. Family is children's first non-formal school. From there every child is able to speak. If a family uses their mother tongue as their daily language when communicating, then the children as family members will use the same language in environments outside the family.

#### 2. Regional Language Shift Seen from the Perspective of Kindergarten Schools and Playgroups

The language learned and used in kindergartens and playgroups will influence their language skills as adults. This is because they are in the sensitive period for learning language consciously. Even though regional languages get a small portion in the area of formal education.

### **Conclusion**

Regional languages or mother tongues experienced a significant shift, leaving 13 regional languages surviving. Research that has been conducted proves that regional language speakers are decreasing, especially among the younger generation. Javanese,



which is among the most spoken categories in Indonesia, is also experiencing a language shift.

The main factor found based on the research results is the role of parents in the family sphere which generally does not optimally provide regional languages as a first language to their children. Likewise, the role of schools has not optimally positioned regional languages as a priority in the learning process.

Indonesian society is a society that is geared towards becoming a multilingual society. They are required to be skilled in regional languages, Indonesian and foreign languages such as English. This demand may not be a big one because in reality many people are individually capable of being multilingual. However, there is no pattern that can become a role model, especially for parents who will become teachers in family education, to provide regional languages as the first language for their children. Apart from that, efforts need to be made to raise the prestige of regional languages which can equalize the social status of languages in society. The hope is that regional languages can become languages to be proud of so that their status becomes equal to other languages

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