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Master Program in Linguistics, Diponegoro University
in Collaboration with
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THE ENGLISH DEPARTMENT STUDENTS' USE OF JAVANESE LANGUAGE

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Abstract

This paper concerns the use of Javanese language by English department students of Diponegoro University, Semarang, Indonesia. The students selected as the subjects of research are those of the second (2nd) and fourth (4th) semesters whose both parents are Javanese. In total, there were sixty-two (62) students participating in the research. The students were given questionnaires and discourse completion tasks to fill in; the questionnaires were used to elicit data regarding the students' choice of codes in the family or home domain, and the discourse completion tasks (DCT-s) were used as a means to double check their answers in the questionnaires. The highest statistics of Javanese usage in the family domain is between the respondents and their older siblings because within this context they can use *ngoko*, the style of Javanese they master the most, whereas in interactions other than that with their siblings, the students must use *krama*, *madya* or *ngoko alus* styles, depending upon the participants' ages, social status and distance. Most of the students, as is shown in the DCT-s, are at best in the *ngoko* style.

Keywords: Javanese language use, university students, family domain, and *ngoko*, *madya* and *krama* speech styles.

INTRODUCTION

One of the most intense discussions regarding Javanese language concerns the future or fate of the language; scholars have been wondering whether or not Javanese is endangered and whether or not it will continue to exist (due to the increasing use of the national language, Indonesian language or *bahasa Indonesia*) (e.g. Gunarwan, 2002; Musgrave, n.d.; Purwoko, 2011; Ravindranath & Cohn, 2014). Musgrave (n.d.) holds that Javanese is among those local languages in Indonesia which are not endangered although the numbers of their first language speakers as well as the proportions of their use are declining. Javanese, first of all, has a large number of speakers in Indonesia and studies (e.g. Kurniasih, 2005) show that "the language is maintaining its hold on some domains of use and retains vitality amongst at least some social groups" (Musgrave, n.d., p. 10). Another reason why Javanese will continue to last is that it is benefited from the government of Indonesia's policy that requires the teachings of local languages at schools (Musgrave, n.d.). Because Javanese has a large number of speakers and it is the language of Java Island, the heart of the government of Indonesia, Javanese language is politically advantageous. A lot of people will pay attention to its decline and will do serious efforts to maintain its future. Also, since it is the language of the Java Island, the government of Indonesia will provide more resources and pay more serious attention to its maintenance. Javanese, borrowing Musgrave's words (n.d., p. 13), is "in a position to take advantage of the possibilities offered by the education system and to generate concern from large number of speakers, which can be turned into political pressure".

In contrast, Ravindranath and Cohn (2014) believe that the fact that Javanese has a large number of speakers does not mean that it is "secure"; that Javanese has been substituted by Indonesian in some areas of use and that it is not always passed to young generations are indication that the language is endangered:

"[i]n spite of their large speech communities, the Javanese, Sundanese, and Madurese languages are actually endangered in that some of their domains of usage are being taken over by Indonesian, and, to a lesser extent, in that they are not always passed on to the next generation" (Adelaar in Ravindranath & Cohn, 2014, p. 69).

The continuously decreasing use of Javanese, especially among young people, has since long become my concern; I am wondering as to what the future of the language and culture will be. Therefore,

I was excited to be involved in research on students' use of and attitudes towards Javanese language³⁰, and for our preliminary study we selected students of English Department Universitas Diponegoro (Undip), Semarang. However, in this paper I focus only on the students' use of Javanese in the family or home domain, since, as Gunarwan (2002, p. 923) puts it, the family domain is "the last bastion of language maintenance". Two issues are raised in the paper; first, whether or not the students still use Javanese in their interactions with the family members, and, second, if they do, what is the Javanese speech style that they mostly use.

RESEARCH METHOD

The subjects of this research, as previously mentioned, are students of English Department of Diponegoro University (*Universitas Diponegoro* abbreviated into Undip). Two batches of students are selected, i.e. the 2013 and 2014 batches or the second and fourth semester students. They, aged 18-20 years old, should have met the requirement that both of their parents are Javanese, but such factors as whether they come from rural or urban areas and whether they grew up in non-Javanese-home regions were disregarded. Twenty-nine (29) fourth semester students participated in the study, consisting of twenty-three (23) female students and six (6) male students. Thirty-three (33) students of the second semester, comprising of twenty-seven (27) female and six (6) male students, took part in the research. Thus, sixty-two (62) students participated in this study.

The students were asked to fill in questionnaires consisting closed questions, used to elicit data regarding their use of Javanese in the family, education (university), friendship and neighborhood domains. Included in the family domain are the use of Javanese in their interactions with their parents, siblings and members of extended family. Also, the students were to fill in discourse completion tasks (DCT-s), as a means to verify data obtained in the questionnaires. The students' answers in the questionnaires and DCT were counted, so as to discover the proportion of the Javanese language usage at home.

FINDING & DISCUSSION

Based on his research conducted on two Javanese home domain cities Yogyakarta and Surabaya, Asim Gunarwan (2002, p. 934) wrote that Javanese language "is undergoing shift". Young generations of Javanese had less positive attitude towards the language. They no longer saw it significant to transmit Javanese into their descendants, leading to a situation within which less and less young generations acquired Javanese as their first language. This impacted, among others, in the decreasing use of Javanese, including its usage in the home domain; young people preferred to use Indonesian than using Javanese in their interactions at home. In these circumstances, although the Javanese language could not be considered to be endangered, it was threatened because it was "proceeding negatively", meaning that "the quantity of" Javanese usage "is becoming lower and lower from the older generation to the younger ones" (Gunarwan, 2002, p. 934).

Gunarwan's study was conducted and published thirteen years ago, but the issue he raised, i.e. that the Javanese language use is continuously decreasing, has continuously become an unresolved issue in the recent era (e.g. Purwoko, 2011; Ravindranath & Cohn, 2014; Wijayanto, 2007). In terms of first language acquisition, for instance, Gunarwan's finding is in line with the result of this study, which shows that there are forty-two percent (42%) of the respondents who acquired Javanese as their first language, while there are forty-eight percent (48%) of them acquiring Indonesian³¹. The figures may only differ slightly (6%), but it does indicate that there are more parents who passed Indonesian to their children than those who transmitted Javanese. One assumption that we may draw here is that the parents did (and do?) not see it imperative to pass their local language to their off-springs. It may also mean that they have less positive attitude towards the Javanese (hence, they do not consider it necessary to transfer their local language to their daughters and sons!). Further, we can say that the efforts to maintain

³⁰ This paper was developed out of research initiated by my colleague Ibu Deli Nirmala and subsequently carried out by both Bu Deli and I. I would like to express my gratitude to Bu Deli for her inspiration, thought and work, without which this paper would have been impossible. Also, I thank the students of linguistics of the 2012 batch for their assistance in processing the data.

³¹ The rest states that they acquire Indonesian and Javanese as their first languages, which I need to clarify further because in first language acquisition parents usually choose one language, either Indonesian or Javanese, to be passed to their children.

Javanese language that have been done thus far have not been successful yet, and more serious efforts are necessary so as to maintain the language.

Since a large number of the parents do not require Javanese language be used at home, it is unsurprising if the number of students using Javanese in their interaction with the parents is not encouraging. Out of sixty-two (62) respondents, only thirty-eight percent (38%) of them communicate in Javanese, while the rest use Indonesian and a combination of Indonesian and Javanese. Counted separately, the statistics will show that forty-five percent (45%) of the fourth semester students speak Javanese to their parents, and thirty-six percent (36%) of the second semester ones do. A more detailed figure of the Javanese language usage in the respondent-parent interaction can be seen in the following Table 1:

4 th Semester Students						2 nd Semester Students					
Female			Male			Female			Male		
J	I	JI	J	I	JI	J	I	JI	J	I	JI
43.5%	13%	43.5%	50%	-	50%	30%	17%	53%	50%	17%	34%

Note: Javanese (J), Indonesian (I) and a mix of Javanese-Indonesian (JI)

Table 1: Language used in Student-Parent Communication

The table suggests that for both the fourth and second semester students, there are less than 45% of the female students who speak Javanese (J) to their parents, while there are fifty percent (50%) of the males using Javanese in the parent-son communication. Unfortunately, the number of female students and that of the males are in sharp contrast; there are more than twenty (20) female students in each batch, but there are only six (6) male ones. Therefore, I do not dare to say that the result of this study is in accordance with those of Yacinta Kurniasih's (2005) and Nancy Smith-Hefner's (2009), where women show lower tendency to use Javanese language in daily communication.

In their contact with the parents, the respondents say that the *ngoko alus* style is used the most, but exception is formed by the second semester male students who mostly use the *ngoko* style code to their parents. This is interesting because in Javanese culture the relationship between parents and sons are not equal relationship; parents are considered to be having higher social status and are, thus, to be respected. This means that Javanese children should use refined language (*madya* or *krama*) to communicate with their parents. However, in the case of the second male students, they can use *ngoko* to their parents because the parents want the relationship to be more relaxed:

- *Karena ibu saya mengatakan kepada saya sendiri bahwa jika saya menggunakan Bahasa Krama maka akan terasa sangat-kaku dan ibu saya memilih untuk menjadi akrab daripada kaku seperti itu;*
- *Lebih akrab.*

The succeeding table shows the percentage of the use of Javanese speech style in the respondent-parent relations:

4 th Semester Students							
Female				Male			
N	NA	KM	KI	N	NA	KM	KI
8%	58%	25%	8%	-	80%	-	20%

2 nd Semester Students							
Female				Male			
N	KM	NA	KI	N	KM	NA	KI
27%	9%	64%	-	75%	25%	-	-

Note: *Ngoko* (N), *Ngoko Alus* (NA), *Krama Madya* (KM) and *Krama Inggil* (KI)

Table 2: Javanese Style used in Student-Parent Relations

The comparison of the use of *ngoko*, *madya* (KM) and *krama* (KI) in the table 2 is in line with Purwoko's argument that the *basa* style (*madya* and *krama*) "is the very first code which will suffer from

deprivation, attrition, or obsolescence, better not to say, extinction in the near future" (Purwoko, 2011, p. 28). On the other hand, the *ngoko* style will last longer. The data obtained in the DCT also suggest that *ngoko* is the style of the Javanese that the respondents master the best. They, for example, say "*Bu, tulung jipuke anduk*" and "*Kok suwe men to?*" to their parents, instead of saying "*Bu, nyuwun tulung pundhutaken anduk*" or "*Bu, nyuwun tulung pundhutake anduk*".

In opposition to the use of Javanese in the student-parent communication, the use of Javanese in the students' relationship with their older siblings is quite high, for seventy-two percent (72%) of them speak Javanese to their older brothers or sisters. The relationship is marked by the use of the *ngoko* and *ngoko alus* styles. Some students state that they use *ngoko* and *ngoko alus* because they have intimate relationship (*akrab* and *dekat*) with their older siblings; some others use Javanese *ngoko* for ease and convenience (*lebih enak*) or as a mere custom. One female student who always speaks Indonesian to her parents states that she converses in Javanese *ngoko* with her older brothers and sisters simply because she is very much used to using it since childhood (*karena sudah menjadi kebiasaan sedari kecil ketika saya dan kakak-kakak saya mengobrol, kami menggunakan bahasa Jawa Ngoko*).

Interestingly, the statistic of the students using Javanese to interact with their younger siblings drops to thirty-eight percent (38%). This declining figure arises due to the fact that there are only 29% of the second semester females using Javanese to talk to their younger brothers and sisters. In contrast, sixty-seven percent (67%) of the fourth semester female respondents use Javanese to communicate to their younger siblings. The figures of the males' use of Javanese are also inconsistent; 25% of the fourth semester males use Javanese, but none of the second semester does. Unfortunately, no rationale can be proposed here, since in the questionnaire the students were not asked to provide reasons why they select a code or codes other than Javanese in their interaction. The questionnaire, as well as the DCT, is centered on the use of Javanese and the Javanese style code(s) the students used in particular interactions. The students were to provide reasons why they use a particular Javanese style in a particular interaction but were not asked to supply reasons why they do not use Javanese in certain interactions. I could only speculate here that the younger generation (the second semester females) prefers Indonesian to Javanese in almost all communications.

Other forms of interactions the respondents perform at home are interactions with members of the extended family and the housekeepers. The figure is as follows:

4 th Semester Students						2 nd Semester Students					
Female			Male			Female			Male		
J	I	JI	J	I	JI	J	I	JI	J	I	JI
19%	24%	58%	33%	17%	50%	36%	14%	50%	33%	50%	17%

Table 3: Student-Extended Family Interactions.

Table 3 shows that the students tend to avoid using Javanese in their interaction with members of their extended family; they prefer to use Indonesian or to mix Indonesian and Javanese, such as:

1. *Eyang, udah malem. Sare.*
2. *Mbah sudah dhahar? Dhahar dulu, Mbah.*
3. *Nyuwun ngapura. Maafin saya.*

Likewise, in their relations with the housekeepers, the respondents prefer Indonesian and a mix between Indonesian and Javanese to Javanese alone. One out of twelve students (8%) writes that she communicates with her housekeeper in the Javanese *ngoko alus*, but in the DCT she mixes Javanese and Indonesian and uses Indonesian in the interaction:

- *Mbak nyuwun tulung, kamare dibereske ya. Makasih*
- *Mbak, ini ada titipan dari ayah.*

CONCLUSION

The students of English Department, Diponegoro University, still use Javanese in the home domain with their parents, siblings, extended family and housekeepers. The data show that Javanese is mostly used by the students to communicate with their older siblings, within which they can use the Javanese *ngoko* and *ngoko alus*, the styles of Javanese that they master well.

The fact that these university students still use Javanese had better be seen in a positive light. This should give us hope to continue promoting the maintenance of the language. We need to ensure that our young generations will continue to use Javanese and are willing to pass it to their children.

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