

Students' Fundamental Perception in Apprehending Global and Local Languages Relation

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Abstract

The study investigates the fundamental concept and perception of global and local languages by examining university students majoring in Javanese education. The existing literature has supported the notion that globalization is mostly blamed by people for the decline of local culture, especially for language aspect. However, English as global language still plays a significant role, particularly for scholars to participate in global interaction and information access. Seeing such dichotomous relation, this study investigated students' perception through descriptive qualitative approach. The data were critically analyzed within a theoretical framework which included multilingualism concepts. The subjects were 30 junior year college students majoring in Javanese education in one of public universities in Indonesia. Students were asked to fill in the questionnaires about both languages and their inherent relations. The result revealed that Javanese has emerged to be the language of philosophical cognition and knowledge construction. However, Javanese language is also considered less important than English especially dealing with its significance to access global information. As conclusion, the study is essential as one of literature sources in constructing understanding to involve government, schools and society to promote the appropriate approach in responding the relation between global and local languages.

Keywords: *global language, local language, students' perception*

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INTRODUCTION

The relation between English and local languages around the globe has been a central topic of debate since long time ago. English, as an international language, is arguably the most important language to master for several purposes, including for academic, political, economic, socio and cultural purposes (Ivone, 2005). Its power and hegemony have been expanded to many countries and affecting the use of local languages.

The body of literature has supported the notion that globalization and the expansion of English are mostly blamed by people for the decline of local culture, especially for language (Joseph & Ramani, 2012). However, English cannot be put aside directly as this language still plays a significant role, particularly for scholars and universities to participate in global interaction and to access information. Therefore, higher education institutions as the platform of knowledge transfer is a strategic place in keeping the balance between English and local language.

In response to the notion, this study holds two essential points elucidated within the title: students' perception and global-local languages relation. Both will specifically deal with English and Javanese² languages in Indonesian higher education system; how university students majoring in Javanese Education respond on the power relation between English and Javanese languages.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Emergence of English as a Powerful Language

² Javanese is a language spoken in Java Island, Indonesia, especially in Central Java, Yogyakarta, and East Java. The language is the native language of more than 75,500,000 people spreading across Indonesia provinces and even in abroad such as Malaysia, Hong Kong, and Suriname (Hastangka. 2010. *Javanese Language and Cultural Identity in Indonesian Local Curriculum* (a study in Yogyakarta)". The center for pancasila studies. Gadjah Mada University. Yogyakarta).

Free-trade policy has rapidly changed how the world advances. The dimension of politics, economy, and culture are interconnected more intensively than ever, including language (Fairclough, 2006; Pennycook, 2007). English is still believed to be an important international language although lately, Mandarin emerges as a new powerful language because China is rising to the top economy of the world. English is manifested as the language for cultural expression, social mobility, and access to a better life (Pennycook, 2007).

The dominance of English in global development has caused some people to be more aware of the position of local language. In most countries, people have started to realize the importance of being multilingual. In fact, several studies (Cummins, 2000; Hornberger, 2003; Pennycook, 2007) have concluded that multilingualism is an inevitable mechanism in current global world. When people can speak more than one language in a multilingual country, they are believed to be more successful. In Indonesia for example, the policy of making English compulsory in national exam is just one of the evidences that English is strongly influential scholars within Indonesian Education System³. Hence, with English receives more dominant grows and spreads, local/Indigenous languages definitely should be more cautious.

Joseph and Ramani (2006) explain that English has two powerful impacts in two domains⁴: The first is the danger of an educated middle class becoming monolingual (and monoliterate) in English. This scenario has not reached in Indonesia, but in India and South Africa, the number of middle-class people who

³ National Examination in Indonesia used to be the only determining mechanism for students passing decision. Although the exam is no longer the only determinant, national exam is still seen as a big deal for schools and students.

⁴ Joseph, M. & Ramani, E. (2012). "Glocalization": Going Beyond the Dichotomy of Global Versus Local through Additive Multilingualism. *International Multilingual Research Journal*, 6, 22-34.

regard English as their mother language is increasing. Local languages in such countries start losing their importance in being the language of communication.

Secondly, they also mention that the spreading of English can potentially widen the gap of social exclusion. For the time being, English is mostly required for applying a respected position in a company or university. People with good command of English will be likely chosen to be accepted in the application process. In addition, English is also one of the main requirements for continuing higher degree. These cases have elucidated how powerful English is: people with good English is socially more appreciated than those with no English. Therefore, in Indonesia, the belief that mastery of and competence in English will ensure increased statuses, job opportunities, and social mobility is getting increased.

However, despite the importance of English mastery, teaching English in Indonesia is challenging especially when it deals with limited time and difficulty of tracking down adequate sources made for English users (Ivone, 2005). This happens because Indonesia officially positions English only as first foreign language (EFL). According to Lauder (2008), EFL is a term for the use or study of the English by non-native speakers in countries where English is generally not a local medium of communication. He also concludes that Indonesia is part of “expanding circle” country according to Kachru’s three-circle model of World Englishes. In the expanding circle, English language learners mostly encounter some difficulties such as lack of English language exposure, limited use of language in the real life context and limited quality infrastructures and teachers.



Figure 1. Kachru’s Three-circle model of World Englishes.
Source: (Kachru, 1992: 356), reprinted in (Jenkins, 2003: 16).

The hegemony of English in the current world has created a growing anxiety on local/indigenous languages. People start believing that mastering English, with all global demand and free trade mechanism, will guarantee their future. In Indonesia, International schools, with English as their instructional language, are mushrooming. Additionally, most parents now urge their children to have private courses in English after school hours. However, the portion of local language, especially Javanese Language, is declined significantly.

The History of English in Indonesia

In Indonesia, English is a first foreign language. This means that English is not used as an official language within educational or governmental administrations. In the neighboring countries such as Malaysia, The Philippines and Singapore, English is a second language (Lauder, 2008). Therefore, English is only used in a formal academic context such as in school or research center.

In fact, it was not until 1955 that English was officially mentioned by Central Inspectorate of English Language Instruction in the Ministry of Education decree (Lauder, 2008). And finally in 1989, The Ministry of Education (MoE) legally acknowledged English as the first foreign language and made it one of the compulsory subjects to be taught at the secondary level. However, MoE allows it to be taught from Primary Four until now as EFL (*Pusat Kurikulum*, 2007).

Notwithstanding its role as a foreign language, learning English is compulsory for students in Indonesia. Indonesian national curriculum had issued a mandate stating that English is one of mandatory subjects to be examined in national examination along with Mathematics and Bahasa Indonesia.

In higher education institutions, students are required to master English, especially for gaining the information needed as part of their final project writing. Mastery of English is significant to help students reading international publication related to their topic of study. The regulation is also applied for students in Javanese Language Program, such as in Semarang State University, Indonesia. Although their final project is written in *Bahasa* Indonesia and their topic is Javanese, the department makes it compulsory for the students to involve English-written journal articles and books as their references.

Reflecting on the phenomena, a problematic situation will occur when there are two or more languages come into (Winford, 2003). The situation will lead into three scenarios: language maintenance, language shift, or new language creation. Therefore, the interaction between the dominating and dominated languages must be assessed carefully. If the interaction is not maintained thoroughly, the dominating language will potentially endanger or cause any changes to the dominated language, i.e. in the use, structure, and form.

Interestingly, notwithstanding its effect on local language, people seem to be very accepting the fact that English can be expanded widely. Some experts believe that this is due to media which has central influence in such conditioning (Joseph & Ramani: 2012). As we can see, the spreading of international news, Hollywood expansion, and socio-economic interaction among countries play significant part in expanding the use of English.

Further, Dalby (2003) explains that when people stop doing the effort to mitigate the effect, the possibility is to create a new contact language. This new language is referred as a mixed or hybrid language. This circumstance is what probably happens with English and Javanese with some new terms and code switching such as in the following sentences “sorry *ya*, *aku rak isa mangkat wingi* (sorry, I couldn’t go yesterday)”, “thanks bro, *masakane enak!*” (Thanks you brother, the food is delicious!)⁵.

The Existence of Javanese Language

Javanese is one of some indigenous languages in Indonesia.⁶ As part of a very diverse country, Javanese has emerged to be one of the most powerful language. According to Subroto, *et.al*, (2007), Javanese Language is spoken by more than 75,500,000 people and spread across Indonesia provinces, even in abroad such as Malaysia, Hong Kong, and Suriname. The main areas of Javanese Language are in Central Java, Yogyakarta, and East Java Provinces.

Lately, there are many foreigners both foreign students and visitors who are interested to study Javanese language for various purposes. Javanese language itself is a unique language as it has several styles or registers depending on social

⁵ This code switching starts being common to be used by people both in spoken (daily conversation) and written language (texting short messages)

⁶ According to Sugiharto, S., it has been estimated that some 700 local languages in Indonesia are in a moribund state. The article is entitled “Indigenous language policy as a national cultural strategy” and published in The Jakarta Post, October 28, 2013.

context. Each style employs its own vocabulary, grammatical rules and even prosody (Hastangka: 2010). The grammar and structure of Javanese language relies on the area where it is spoken and speakers involved within the context.

Regarding to the styles, Javanese language is categorized into three major styles, namely *Ngoko*, *Madya*, and *Krama*. This category is made based on the degree of politeness and contextual situation where the language is used. *Ngoko* is used informal speech between friends and close relatives. *Madya* is spoken for the intermediary form between *ngoko* and *karma*. And *Krama* is used as the most polite and formal style. It is used between persons of the same status who do not wish to be informal or when some is talking to others with higher status. *Krama* is also the official style for public speeches, announcements, etc. (Hastangka: 2010).

For most people, Javanese Language is believed to have high moral values and ethics. The language contains mystical and philosophical dimensions which serve as Javanese way of life (Hastangka: 2010). Additionally, the language is also believed as the expression of tolerance, humility, patience, and peace (non-violence). Therefore, people who speak Javanese really preserve the existence from getting extinct because it is part of their identity.

However, in reality, Javanese language encounters serious problem. According to Purwoko (2011), Javanese is considered as an endangered language. The argument is based on Kincade's five-level systems of danger.⁷ The language under this category means that it is not effectively being passed on to the next generation due to non-optimal efforts to preserve it.

No.	Kincade (1991: 160-3)	Wurm (1988: 192)	Bauman (1980)
(1)	Viable language	Potentially endangered language	Flourishing
(2)	Viable but small language	Endangered language	Enduring
(3)	Endangered language	Seriously endangered language	Declining
(4)	Nearly extinct language	Moribund language	Obsolescent
(5)	Extinct language	Extinct language	Extinct

Table 1: Five-Level System of Danger.
Source: Chrystal (2000), reprinted in Purwoko (2011).

From the field observation, the reality (as reflected in school and daily use), there seems to be a declining trend for young generation to speak in Javanese, especially for higher styles (*madya* and *krama*).⁸ Purwoko (2011) believes that the problem is highly related to three factors: language maintenance, language shift, and creation of a new contact language. When society is exposed to new language and culture, language interaction is inevitable. When there are two languages come into contact, a mode dominating language will threaten dominated language if there is not any language maintenance efforts from all parties.

Supporting the findings, Hastangka (2010) mentions that there are three main problems in preserving Javanese languages. The first factor is the limited number of competent teachers in teaching this language, especially dealing with method of teaching and information technology mastery. The second factor is the limited and complexity of learning material. And the third factor is the stereotype amongst students that Javanese language just for old people.

Reflecting on what has happened to English and Javanese languages, it is very interesting to investigate such dichotomous relationship. Some experts concern that such use of English will eventually put it as a superior language which can endanger the existence of local language. Therefore, analyzing the perception of Javanese education students to view such power relation is essential to critically assess their choices and

⁷ The paper was presented in an International Seminar "Language Maintenance and Shift. July 2011, Indonesia"

⁸ Higher levels of Javanese styles are considered difficult and inapplicable for the daily context as more people just use the *Ngoko* style.

efforts in preserving Javanese Language in their future classrooms.

RESEARCH METHOD

Seeing such dichotomous relation, this study investigated students' perception through descriptive qualitative approach. There were 30 students participating in this study who came from one of public universities in Indonesia. The students were in their third year and majoring in Javanese education. The decision of involving third year students was based on situation where students were prepared for both micro teaching in school and final project writing.

The data were collected through interview and questionnaires in regard to their perception on the relation between global and local languages. The students were then asked to fill in the questionnaires about both languages and their inherent relations. The questionnaires were open-ended questions (simple "yes, no, don't know" answers with some follow-up responses). The answers were further reviewed within a theoretical framework of multilingualism concepts.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Students majoring in Javanese education are directed to be quality Javanese teachers for all school levels in Central Java, East Java, and Yogyakarta provinces. For example, in Semarang State University Central Java, since its first establishment, the department has been graduating thousands of professionals as Javanese Language teachers.

Each year, approximately 125 freshmen enrolled in this department. The number shows significant demand from society to have more Javanese language teachers. Within 8 semesters, the students study some Javanese subjects, both pedagogic and literature aspects. Among them are Javanese culture, folklore, introduction to literature and education, history of Javanese language, micro teaching, final project, and others.

To be able to finish their degree, the students are required to write a final project. When their final project title is approved, their professors will require the students to look for at least 5 international journal articles to support their final project. Therefore, students' mastery in English for this stage is pivotal. They must be able to read and write in English in order to comprehend the journal articles or books written in English.

According to field observation, some students believe the use of Javanese is declining, especially for the higher level (*Madya* and *Krama*). Therefore, they want to preserve it by being Javanese teachers and writing final project related to their topic. However, in order to write their final project, students must master English to access international journal articles for their reference. Not to mention, the expansion of English in entertainment and business has also influenced young generation to be more familiar with English as compared to Javanese language.

The Power of English and Javanese

Based on the questionnaire, the students believe that society in general consider English to be more prestigious. There are 64% of students believe that English is seen more prestigious by society while the other 26% say that they don't know and only 10% say that Javanese is more prestigious. They argue that English is globally used as an international language. The use of English is not only for academic purpose, but also for entertainment and communication in general. They rationalize such perception because English is manifested as international language. The requirement from their department to cite some international journal written in English is one of the examples. Besides, the use of English in mainstream media such as TV, magazines, and newspapers are getting higher.

However, in terms of philosophical values contained in both languages, 60% students believe that Javanese Language contain more appropriate teaching and values. They also believe that Javanese language is more polite due to its three

styles which depend on the contextual situation and to whom they are talking with. According to the further discussion with them, the students agree that English is increasingly needed as people need to access global information. When people do not master in English, they will be eventually left behind. However, the students also believe that Javanese language, despite its insignificant role in global interaction, is still needed because it teaches them good value and philosophy of life.

Referring to what Edwards (2008) has mentioned, such phenomenon is called as the “romantic perspective”.⁹ The students value Javanese language to be “language-as-expression-identity”. The language is used to express people’s identity. The students in Javanese education consider preserving Javanese language is not merely as an effort to teach linguistics domain, but also cultural aspects such as ideology, culture, and identity as Javanese people.

However, Janks (2010) explains that English is the medium for cultural and knowledge capital as well. Culturally, English has come to Indonesia with the Hollywood-based entertainment business. Popular music, movies, fashion, and other artworks have been extremely powerful in driving the trends in a country, including Indonesia. In addition, social media growth like Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram have made huge impact for current generation too in accessing English.

As a knowledge capital, English is the language for the advancement of science and technology Janks: 2010). Two thirds of global traffic for email, broadcasting, and academic publications are in English. Books and references for academic are mostly written in English. Therefore, if people want to catch up with the global current issue, English is presumably the first language to master.

Further, Aitchison (2001) mentions that most language change is due to language contacts; a situation where a language encounters another language. What happens with Javanese is under this situation. The increasing portion to study Indonesian and English in school, (they even use English as the instructional languages) has declined the power of Javanese to grow. Javanese language, for example, only receives 1 hour meeting (in some schools, it has 2 hours) per week in high schools, while Indonesian and English have 4 hours meetings.

Inequality between Javanese and English

Notwithstanding the higher regard of students to Javanese, 80% of the students believe that English and Javanese languages are not equal. English is seen more dominant in the current world. This inequality is presumably caused by the growing expansion of “Hollywood”.¹⁰

One item asking on whether the use of Javanese is decreasing shows a surprising number. All of the students (100%) believe that Javanese language is declining and English is rising. In Indonesia, English has indeed become more popular. The emergence of thousands of English-language assisting courses and program shows how massive the influence of English is. Amidst these English language centers, Javanese language is like nothing to compare.

In academic context, we must say that the opportunity for students in practicing local language is very rare. According to Hasangka (2010), the trend in preserving local language, especially at school is not satisfying enough. He finds that Javanese language teachers are still lack of competency and professionalism. Moreover, Javanese language handbook for teachers and the opportunity of training and seminar for teachers in Javanese language teaching and learning are still lacking.

⁹ Edwards, J. (2008). The ecology of language: Insight and illusion. In A. Creese, P. Martin, & N. Hornberger (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of language and education Vol. 9. Ecology of language* (pp. 15–26). Philadelphia, PA: Springer.

¹⁰ English is considered as the medium for cultural and knowledge capital through the expansion of Hollywood-based entertainment business.

The decline of English is also caused by a stereotype amongst student that Javanese language is just for elderly people (Purwoko: 2011). There are 82% of the students who believe that English is more popular than Javanese Language especially for young generation. The students think that younger generation has the mentality of “knowing English makes you cool”. Therefore, it is not uncommon to see teenagers using English slang language when they communicate on fb, twitter, or sms (thanks, sorry, on the way, etc). In addition, most students think that society looks down on Javanese language because they think that it has “low value” in the global competition.

Not only serving as scientific language, English is also a language of cultural capital. According to Bourdieu (1991), cultural capital means dominant discourses, languages, and knowledge to which elite groups usually have access. Cultural capital has potential to be a dominant hegemony which can overrule marginalized language or groups.

In addition, many Javanese vocabularies have lost because they are undocumented (for example, household vocabularies). Therefore, there are not many Javanese vocabularies related with technology and science. Eventually, Javanese language cannot be used in the scientific writing. Therefore, even for Javanese scholars, they must learn English in order to make their findings to be internationally published.

Several Efforts to Preserve Local Languages

The decline of Javanese and the increasing of English trigger the concern from society. There must be some tangible actions to prevent local language to be endangered. There are 92% of the students who believe that government must intensively provide programs that can empower Javanese language as local language. However, they are aware that the responsibility to preserve the language does not exclusively belong to the government only.

The expansion of English as an international language has threatened the existing local languages around the world. Restriction programs from English and resists the hegemonic impacts of English by empowering the power of local languages and literatures are needed as part of the protection for the local national languages. Government, education system, and society must work hand in hand in realizing the programs. Government must regulate policies about the use of local language. They also must provide financial support and periodical monitoring program to the policy that they have issued.

In regard to education system, teachers must be trained how to be a professional instructor of local language by providing them comprehensive understanding through seminar, books, training, and other programs. Teachers need to comprehend how to create strategic learning material and curriculum development which enhance students' awareness in practicing their local language. Evaluation and assessment for the techniques and students' progress are important as well.

As community, people should start making some supporting programs for local language preservations such as language day and social gathering in Javanese language. Society, especially family, plays central role for young generation to practice and apprehend both local and global languages.

CONCLUSION

As conclusion, the study finds that although Javanese has emerged to be a language of high-level cognition and knowledge construction, Javanese language is also considered lesser than English by the students especially dealing with its significance to access global information. The students consider English as an international language has the power to help people in accessing knowledge and information. In addition, English is the most widely-used language for academic purpose such as books, journal articles, research finding, etc. Therefore, in order to gain the knowledge and share their ideas in a global

scale, they must master English, even for Javanese language scholars.

Government and society must create programs for people to preserve Javanese language, but at the same time, understand English for global interaction. Education system and national policy also need to consider some prevention effort so that the negative impact of global language expansion can be minimized.

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