

**FAMILY LANGUAGE POLICY: PATHWAYS TO
BILINGUALISM AND MULTILINGUALISM**

THESIS

by

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents: (1) the background of the study, (2) the problems of the study, (3) the objectives of the study, and (4) the significance of the study.

1.1. Background

Language plays a crucial role in many areas of life. Its effect extends not only to communication but also to the social side. According to Morreale et al., (2012), language is historically seen as advantageous because it is a communication tool, but this does more than that. It is also an efficient element to demonstrate how people describe social circumstances, such as their views of what others know and feel. In short, language is a means, not only as a medium of communication but also as an essential part of the social context.

Considering its overwhelming amount of value, there are thousands of languages in the world. Romaine (2013) reports there are 6,900 languages in 200 countries around the world. Indonesia is one of the multilingual nations. Its place is in the second after Papua New Guinea. Indonesia has 722 languages. Also, 95 percent of people in Indonesia can communicate in at least two languages (Romaine, 2013). It can be inferred that the bi/multilingualism population are found in Indonesia.

Notwithstanding this, the language policy of Indonesia differs from other nations. Simpson (2007) mentions that Indonesia is different from Malaysia and the Philippines as they have English as their second official language. However, on 28 October 1928, Indonesian was proclaimed to be the only official language that should be used as the national language for the unity of the country. It is also stated clearly in Indonesian (UU-RI-No.24-2009, 2009). Thus, the status of English in Indonesia is not stated as a second official language. Its status in Indonesia is only as a first foreign language or English as a foreign language (EFL). This language is only taught and learned in the classrooms rather than

being used on daily basis. In brief, the use of Bahasa Indonesia is part of the Indonesian language policy and English is only learned as a foreign language.

However, there has been a growing interest in English, not just as a foreign language. When we look around the world, many people use English. Based on the statistic, it is obvious that 1, 348 billion people spoke English in 2021, either as a native language or as a second language (Szmigiera, 2021). It is estimated that English has become the most communicated world language. Todorova and Todorova (2018) suggest that international communication and the global spreading of information are two of the most significant components of globalization that would hardly be possible without global language. In other words, it is widely understood that English is a means of communication between cultures. Thus, this drives people to master English as a universal language.

As a matter of a fact, the quality of English education in Indonesia is far from good if compared to other nations. This subject has been erased from the curriculum 2013 for elementary school. Additionally, for the secondary school and the university level, the skills of English are also inadequate. Furthermore, the English proficiency level among Indonesians is poor. It is informed by the annual report of the International Education English First. Indonesian English proficiency was ranked 74st out of 100 countries in the world in 2020. It has shown that Indonesia dropped thirteen spots from the previous year when it became regarded 61st out of 100 countries worldwide (*English Proficiency Index [EF EPI], 2020*). Thus, it can be assumed that EFL teaching in Indonesia is far from satisfactory even though it has been learned and taught for years in Indonesia.

As a consequence of Indonesia's low English proficiency, a city in Indonesia, Palembang, is not included as well-English cities in Indonesia. Based on Rahmadhani's (2019) report, Bali, Jakarta, Yogyakarta, and West Java are placed as cities that have the best level of English among other cities in Indonesia. It is because Palembang is not a tourist place where foreigners come and live like them. It is supported by Erfizal (2018); this city is not properly recognized in the world, especially for those who live outside Asia continent and even has a poor number of foreign visitors as it attracted only 9,850 foreign tourists from

2,011,417 tourists visiting Palembang in 2017. Based on these facts, it can be assumed that intercultural relations facilitate language development.

Considering the low level of English proficiency among Indonesian, especially for those who live in Palembang, the bi/multilingual population which includes at least mastering the global language is needed to succeed in a globalized world. According to Steiner and Hayes (2009), being bi/multilingual makes it possible for people with higher communication skills and greater comprehension not only of the universe surrounding them but also of the many different roles they can play in the world. Furthermore, intercultural communication is becoming a norm in the modern world, and monolingualism is no longer evident in the 21st century (Canagarajah, 2013; Spolsky, 2004; Steiner & Hayes, 2009). Hence, it dares people in Palembang to be able to communicate in two or more languages, in particular in a global language. Being bi / multilingual allows them to meet the demands of globalization and overcome the growing English value as a global language.

Bi/multilingualism is not rare in modern life. McLaughlin (1984; as cited in Rodríguez, 2015) mentions three factors affect skills in using two or more languages: individuals, families, and societies. In the first place, individual characteristics include the attitude, gender, enthusiasm, and intellectual capacity of learners, as well as birth and age when exposed to two languages, among others. Besides, the language skills of the family and the use of the first language and second language, the parents' socioeconomic status, and the parents' behavior towards bilingualism also influence the acquisition of two or more languages. It is supported by other scholars, "promoting bilingualism is one of the best things that parent can do for his or her 21st-century child" (Steiner & Hayes, 2009, p. xi). Consequently, the acquisition of two or more different languages mainly occurs in a social setting that conveys perceptions toward the minority and majority languages, has shown the position of bi/multilingualism, and affects the level of attention for the majority and minority languages in the school and society. Successful language learning is therefore influenced not only by the individual but also by the family and the environment.

As one of the factors affecting someone's capacity for using two or more languages, the family plays a prominent part in making decisions regarding the language use at home. Spolsky's (2004) language policy framework can be applied to family life to analyze family language policy (FLP) through the integration of the three main parts suggested by him. Language beliefs (parents' attitudes/beliefs or core values about language(s), language practices (the real or visible language behavior of family members at home), and language management (parents' efforts to improve existing language practices) are the three aspects (Spolsky, 2004). FLP is simply described as how family members choose the language to be used at household, which is triggered and discontinued by the family itself (Caldas, 2012; King, et al., 2008; Spolsky, 2004). Because the family is the very first children's education or principal place for kids to learn and talk before they bond with others in the world, parents do have a crucial role in addressing the language shift (Baker, 1995, 2000; King & Mackey, 2007; Steiner & Hayes, 2009). According to Spolsky (2004) and Curdt-Christiansen (2009), the decisions or policies made by family are motivated by some non-linguistic macro and micro factors. The macro factors include political, religious, demographic, psychological, cultural, economic, bureaucratic and social. However, the micro factors involve parents' expectations, education and language experience and their knowledge on bi-/multilingualism.

I found that two families in Palembang appreciate the value of bi-/multilingualism. I had known them for long enough from a distance as one of them is living in the same neighborhood as me and another participant is my family's friend. Based on informal talks with one member of those families and accidentally observations, it is correct regarding the phenomena of bi-/multilingual children in those families where various languages are practiced, one of them is English. They also consider that they are more than just part of their children's learning group; they are seen as main players who handle day-to-day routines and events in that setting, profoundly affecting the development of their children's languages. In this regard, several relevant studies had been undertaken to investigate the Family Language Policy (FLP) as pathways to bi-/multilingualism.

Some previous related studies concerned with family language policy. They investigated family language ideologies, practices, and management. However, they were taken in different contexts such as bi/multilingual immigrant, migrant and transnational families, and bi-/multilingual families from different multilingual countries. Each family from those contexts had a different family language policy.

First, some studies focused on immigrant families who raised children in more than one language. Most of the families lived in a country where English is used as a first language such as the U.K and the U.S. They consist of Scottish Chinese families, Turkish families in the Netherlands, Albanian in Greece, Chinese families in Quebec, Chinese families in Britain, Iranian families in the UK, Japanese communities in London, Chinese families in the UK, Korean families in America, Iranian families in the northeast, USA, Russian in Israel, Latino families in the U.S, Indonesian families in USA, and Libyan family in the U.S (Bell, 2013; Bezcioglu-Goktolga & Yagmur, 2018; Chatzidaki & Maligkoudi, 2013; Curdt-Christiansen, 2009; Gharibi & Mirvahedi, 2021; Gyogi, 2015; Hua & Wei, 2016; Kang, 2013; Kaveh, 2018; Moin et al., 2013; Rodríguez, 2015; Silvhiany, 2019; Yazan & Ali, 2018). The studies showed that most families used the local language in the environment to survive in society and used their mother tongue at home to maintain their cultural identity. Not only that, but they also had motivations to be successful in academics and the future in raising bi-multilingual children. Those families also sent children to a school that uses the target language in which their heritage language and provided children some literature to learn the language.

Then, another scope was studies concerned on family language policy of migrant families. They involved migrants in New Zealand, Greek families in Luxembourg, Indian migrant families in Finland, and Indonesian, Arabian and Iranian families in Australia, (Berardi-Wiltshire, 2017; Gogonas & Kirsch, 2018; Haque, 2011; Restuningrum, 2017). The results indicated that each family had different language practices, most of those families used English outside the home and heritage language is used at home. Furthermore, they had their own beliefs

toward the languages used such as to gain social, economic, cultural, and academic purpose since they lived in those countries just temporarily. Besides, the studies also reported that the families controlled the language by managing the children's language environment at home and outside the home.

Additionally, some researchers reported family language policy among transnational families where the spouses have different nationality such as Spanish-Estonian, English-Japanese, Scott-Javanese, and German-Turkish families (Kalayci, 2012; Nakamura, 2019; Sa'diyah & Setiwan, 2019; Soler & Zabrodska, 2017). Those families raised their children with two languages. The studies revealed that the families hold positive beliefs toward bilingualism which say that one-parent one-language strategy is the best strategy to be used for children to communicate with different nationality parents. Therefore, to maintain bilingualism they sent children to a school that uses a bilingual program, language courses, and demanded children to learn through media such as TV and books.

The last context was studied about family language policy which focused on bi-multilingual families in multilingual countries. They included bi-/multilingual families in Indonesia, Singapore, China, Canada, and Malaysia (Bonafix & Manara, 2016; Curdt-Christiansen, 2016; Curdt-Christiansen & Wang, 2018; Efendi, 2020; Gao & Zeng, 2021; Larasati et al., 2018; Slavkov, 2017; Xiaomei, 2017). The results showed that they practiced the language by mixing the language or using the code-switching strategy. The reasons for building bi-/multilingualism at their family were to improve self-esteem, survive in the environment, maintain their cultural and national identity, and be successful in education and career. To preserve the languages, they brought children to a school that uses the target language, bilingual programs or courses, TV, Ipad and books were used to learn the target language. However, a study showed that some families were inconsistent in maintaining bilingualism.

The previous related studies above played a significant role in the design of this study. This study differs from the studies mentioned above. Those studies focused on the role of the parent in learning the language of his or her child and most of them beyond the scope of the EFL context. They focused on immigrant,

migrant and transnational families and bi/multilingual families in different multilingual countries. However, there has been no study exploring the Family Language Policy (FLP) of the bi-/multilingual family in Palembang context where English is rarely used by the locals. Furthermore, some of them were in survey study which involved a large number of participants by spreading the survey questions relating to FLP in paper and online formats, ethnography study which included long time observation and many times interviews, narrative and phenomenological study which only used interviews in collecting the data, and mixed-method study which combined the quantitative with qualitative approach. In contrast with this study, the case study method involved interviews, observations, language portraits and artifacts on a case of two families in Palembang with children who progress as bilingual or multilingual simultaneously or sequentially, one of those in English. Furthermore, most of those previous relevant studies focused on the parents' perspective in raising bi-/multilingual children with few concerns from the children themselves. However, this study did not only focus on parents' voices but also involved the children's perspectives. Therefore, I was interested in exploring the Family Language Policy (FLP) through the use of three components put forward by Spolsky (2014): language ideologies or beliefs, practice, and family management in Palembang. This case had given serious considerations to the decision of the researcher to conduct a case study on the Family Language Policy: Pathways to Bilingualism and Multilingualism.

1.2. The Problems of the Study

Based on the background, the problems of this study were formulated in the following questions:

1. What language ideologies did the families in Palembang hold in bringing up children bi-/multilingually?
2. What were ideological factors shape their language ideologies?
3. How did their language ideologies influence the family language management and practices in these families?

1.3. The Objectives of the Study

In accordance with the problems above, the objectives of this study were:

1. To investigate language ideologies held by families in Palembang who bring up children bi-/multilingually.
2. To investigate the ideological factors assigned to each language.
3. To explore how languages were practiced and managed based on language ideologies.

1.4. The Significance of the Study

This study is expected to impact different academic disciplines and stakeholders, practitioners, and language users in the community. First, gaining concrete information from different contexts leads to the growth of a new family language policy (FLP) research sub-field. It encourages other scholars or researchers to research family language policy in other contexts, particularly in the EFL context. By exploring the reasons behind bi/multilingual parents' decisions, we can enhance our understanding of the global influence on families' language practices at the local level (home and the local community).

Furthermore, this study aids the field of early bi/multilingual acquisition by providing much-needed knowledge of input factors that cause bi/multilingual child development. In other words, it motivates other parents in Indonesia especially in Palembang to raise their children bi/multilingually, at least mastering English, to meet the needs of globalization since English is the global language. Thus, they will get the information and knowledge on how to promote children in more than one language, especially their heritage, national and global language such as Palembang, Indonesia, and English. The crucial information gained includes what factors influencing the development of their children's language, what they should do toward languages, what languages they must practice, and what they should modify and change to build bi/multilingualism at their home.

It will also provide information to key policymakers and stakeholders, such as the government, headmasters, and teachers. Since English is the international language and its status as the first foreign language in Indonesia, it

influences families in bringing up bi/multilingual children at least with English to succeed in this era of globalization. Therefore, it entails making contributions to language instruction decisions made by the government and significant support by headmasters and teachers to upgrade the quality of bi/multilingual children and assist language development on children.

Finally, bilingual or multilingual families and communities themselves will benefit from this study by learning from each other. Families who are bringing up children in more than one language will get new insights on bi/multilingualism from others. They can examine or modify their family language policy (FLP), including their language ideologies/beliefs, practices, and management in their homes. Thus, this study enables them to learn from the success stories of FLP on bi/multilingualism.

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