

## Language Shift of *Krama* to *Bahasa Indonesia* among Javanese Youths and it's Relation to Parents' Social Class

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**Abstract** In Javanese tradition, during every encounter, the communicator had to be aware with the other people social standing to be able to choose the appropriate style of conversation based on the relationship. This article is trying to explore how the phenomenon of Javanese language shift happened in Indonesia as well as to see if social class would play important role in it. As social changes might probably bring differences to language use as it has direct influence from the social status coming from Weber's social class theory. The conclusion of this article, author found a threat for *krama* as Indonesia's language heritage that might vanish. In the context of family communication, future research might want to try to see if parental social class can help the generation to maintain a nation's language heritage regardless of their social class stratification.

**Keywords:** Indonesian Youth; Language use; Javanese

**Abstrak** Dalam tradisi Jawa, dalam setiap pertemuan, komunikator harus sadar dengan sikap sosial orang lain untuk dapat memilih gaya percakapan yang sesuai berdasarkan hubungan. Artikel ini mencoba untuk mengeksplorasi bagaimana fenomena pergeseran bahasa Jawa terjadi di Indonesia serta terlalu melihat apakah kelas sosial akan memainkan peran penting di dalamnya. Karena perubahan sosial mungkin dapat membawa perbedaan pada penggunaan bahasa karena memiliki pengaruh langsung dari status sosial yang berasal dari teori kelas sosial Weber. Kesimpulan artikel ini, penulis menemukan ancaman bagi *krama* sebagai warisan bahasa Indonesia yang mungkin lenyap. Dalam konteks komunikasi keluarga, penelitian masa depan mungkin ingin mencoba untuk melihat apakah kelas sosial orang tua dapat membantu generasi untuk mempertahankan warisan bahasa bangsa terlepas dari stratifikasi kelas sosial mereka.

**Kata kunci:** Pemuda Indonesia; penggunaan Bahasa; Jawa

## **INTRODUCTION**

There are a lot of way to distinguish language use between male and female. Lakoff (1973) claims that language use determined by the position in the society of the language user, where a sentence that is 'acceptable' or 'unacceptable' depend on which gender is uttering, or that may be 'acceptable' under one set of certain subject and 'unacceptable' under another. He adds that there has been differentiation between women and men language.

In Indonesia, according to Smith-Hefner (2009) particularly in Javanese tradition, during every encounter, the communicator had to be aware with the other people social standing to be able to choose the appropriate style of conversation based on the relationship. However, it is not only on Javanese tradition, each ethnicity in Indonesia also has their own traditional rules to address unspoken agreement on how to interact between one another. Followed by the new context of education and social opportunities these recent years, many of young generation start to build up their own rules to interact to every different relationship they have, which make the social class is having less impact to their language use in Java (Smith- Hefner, 2009).

This article is trying to explore how the phenomenon of javanese language shift happened in Indonesia as well as too see if social class would play important role in it based on literature comparation. As social changes might probably bring differences to language use as it has direct influence from the social status coming from Weber's social class theory. However, I argue that it happens not only because of one's economic situation, other social behaviour, or life chances and aspirations as Weber told for someone to speak the language they speak. I believe that, there is strong connection between parents' social class and language shift of the youths (15-24 years old) in Java, as they choose to use national language instead of traditional one is related to parental values and the effects of values on behaviour and

language shift (Kohn, 1963).

A brief review of social class stratification according to Weber that a person's social ranking can be defined by the economic situation, the linguistic and other social behaviour, and lastly is the life chances and aspirations. It was first addressed to define a working class status as Fulcher and Scott (2003) define British social stratification based on occupation. Yet, Clark and Lipset (2012) claims that social relations outside the workplace count as important for social stratification.

There has been argumentation that language use can be differentiate by gender, as Lakoff (1973) on his article talking about language and woman's place in the society would describe that language imbalances and inequities exist in the society depending on the roles of female and male. He claims that there are some features to differentiate women's speech sounds where it has to be more polite than men's. To define polite for women is to leave a decision open, not forcing their ideas, views, or claims to others. In this area, politeness involves an absence of women having strong statement and avoid the expression of giving opinions. As Lakoff's example that it is more of a woman to say "*will you please close the door?*" instead of "*close the door*".

According to Lakoff nowadays many self-respected women are becoming able to use sentence like "*shit, you've put the peanut butter in the refrigerator again*" without fear. Nowadays women are allowed to say cursing words and complain, however, the society tend to give excuse that temper can only be shown by men. So then again, the 'correct' behaviour women learn has prevent them from being taken seriously as an individual by the society (Lakoff, 1973).

Unless a woman has marital status to place her position in society, as there was an event where President Richard Nixon announced the nominees of his Price Board and one of them is a woman. *The Times* magazine put inside the thumbnail of this woman nominee that she is a wife of a

professor of English, even the existence of the husband working title was irrelevant to his wife's achievement. This then said, that women had to be identified by her relationship to men, although this has nothing to do with her qualifications as an individual. Lakoff then concludes that there is distinction made in the marital status in women but not men. The view would never change unless the society decides to see the social position between married and unmarried woman is equal to men.

More specific to Indonesia's situation, a recent research about language shift and gender in modernity has been developed by Hefner-Smith (2009) where she found that in Indonesia, many young and educated women in Central Java start to use *Bahasa Indonesia* (Indonesian national language) instead of *Krama* (traditional javanese language) which in the past it was a symbol of proper and correct language to draw a respectful woman although they have low level education background. It is aligned with Lakoff's argument that many self-respected women start to have their own freedom in using language, however, for women, they would be haunted by social consequences. Such as Hefner-Smith's interview result shows that young, educated women in Java express high insecurities about the difficulties of finding marriage partner. This is also down to parents reputation, one of interview participants mentioned that as parents, they have a mixed feeling with the fact that their children and grandchildren are not using *Krama* anymore. Many thought that the linguistic change draws a loss of respect for elders which is concerning due to the possibilities of parents' poor reputation among neighbors and relatives.

During the New Order era/ some of scholars said it's Suharto Era (1966-1998) the use of language was monitored by teachers, language experts and government officials who insist that young people should use a correct and proper *Bahasa Indonesia*. Today, in contrary, young parents and students are agree to use more informal and flexible *Bahasa Indonesia*, teachers also admit that they allow the students to use informal variants in the classroom. They still

monitored that the language has to be proper and correct, but that does not mean it has to be stiff and boring. A statement is added by Eko that when he was in middle school and high school, he has to address older people with the right language otherwise he would be yelled at. Nowadays, he and his wife mainly speak *Bahasa Indonesia* to their son.

Similar condition happened to a young couple in Yogyakarta, Indonesia where she relies mostly on *bahasa* when talking to her parents at home. According to Hefner-Smith research result, 72% of female in Central Java plan on talking in *Bahasa Indonesia* to their children, and instead, only 52% of male who plan to use *Bahasa Indonesia* with their own children. The overall pattern are obtained from middle-class javanese women and men. Interestingly, as Smith-Hefner found that the use of *Krama* is increased between male as they get older to express a newly aquired social status but in contrast, women are tend to use *Bahasa Indonesia* as they matured.

Gender and language use has strongly related to politeness with it comes to women's language (Smith-Hefner, 1988, 2009; Lakoff, 1973), however, the correlation of gender and polite codes might be different with typical Western examples. In Indonesia, especially in Java, speech patterns are connected to some social-structural variables such as patterns of socialization, models of appropriate male and female linguistic behavior, men's and women's social roles and typical interest. This then can be said that those are related to types of class or gender that polite codes would show different pattern among people and others (Smith-Hefner, 1988). Javanese men are commonly expressing their superior status and authority when they cultivate politeness and formality, in contrast, women use the same polite speech to their husband as a form of politeness and resist the notion of polite speech towards men signals social inferiority.

This then said that, according to Max Weber social class

stratification, a factor where people would choose a type of linguistic form to represent themselves and economic situation as well as education, is cultivating the reason why women tend to choose using *Bahasa Indonesia* instead of *Krama* as part of refusal in having social inequality. Nonetheless, as i mentioned in the introduction, the language shift from using *krama* to *Bahasa Indonesia* among youths in Central Java is not necessarily depending on one's social status according to Max Weber. I argue that it depends as well to their parents' social class.

## **DISCUSSION**

### **Parents' social class affecting parental values**

Kulick (1998) suggests that language are bound to be social phenomena and related to other aspects of culture. In the javanese culture case, the social phenomena is not only about gender but also social expressivity, middle class identity and the perceived ideals of modernity. There is evidence by some research (Lakoff, 1973; Smith-Hefner, 2009) that if a woman get married, the woman are expected to follow their husband such as adjusting language according husband's social class, place of residence even religion if needed. Gender is proved as one of the main factors that affect someone's language preferences, as described by Lakoff that there has been great distinction between women's language and men's language. Smith-Hefner (2009) mentioned in her research results as well that based on the changes on education and economic condition, female are trying to break inferiority symbolic coming from the usage of *Krama*.

What seems to be a gap in here is that, there is a role of parents' social class that cultivate the changing or in this case, parents' social class could be a factor that support the result of Hefner-Smith where 72% of female plan to speak *Bahasa Indonesia* with their children while 52% male plan to not to. Kohn (1963) found that there is a correlation between social class and parent-child relationships. Kohn

claims that parents' social class affect their values which becomes the bridge between position in the larger social structure and the behavior of the individuals. Urie Bronfenbrenner (1958) adds that there have been changes employed by middle-class parents where they become more "permissive".

As Heryanto (2013) describes that middle-class Indonesians are minority of restless, urban, educated who have opinions on liberal lifestyle. Alongside the rapid changes in the society, middle class people are helping medias to grow by responding to the commercial mass media and arguing to most propaganda images and texts appeared on screen and print media. The changes happen because they are responsive to the changes brought by the experts, whilst working-class parents, that are being less-educated, become less directly responsive to the Medias.

Middle-class parental values are more "flexible", which means the children to be eager to learn, to love and to be happy to co-operate, to share with the parents and more attentive to dynamics. Whilst working-class parental values are more for the child to externally imposed standards, where they most likely to value obedience, neatness and cleanliness than middle-class parents do. Bronfenbrenner (1958) adds from her past studies that in a matter of discipline, working-class parents are consistently using punishment, meanwhile, middle-class families are highlighting more on reasoning and appeals to guilt or other approach related to the threat of loss of love. Kohn (1963) analyses that middle-class parental values are different compare to the working class parents. The middle class parents would concern more on the condition of life, while the working-class parents would concern more on the relationship between parents-children. Kohn comes up with interpretative model in sum regarding social class and its impact; Social Class, Conditions of Life, Values, Behaviour.

There can be a gap for argumentation related to classes categorization as in Indonesia as the term "working class" society is rarely used. But based on Kohn criteria, working

class society does exist in Indonesia. They are those people who are under middle class society and mostly work at labour on hourly wage instead of salary while "middle class" society are those who have more income but not wealth such as investment or property.

Subsequently, Kohn adds that there are complexity in understanding the effect of social structure on behaviour. As Kohn trying to address the question of "why does social class matter for parents' relationship with their children?", he has to stop at the point of demonstrating that social position relates to something.

Thus, I would say that, social position could relate to the changing of language use. Bainbridge (2001) claims that language can be a reflection of social and cultural event and a measure of attitude towards the spoken language. Bainbridge also adds that attitudes and behaviour can be overlap that what they say is not reflecting what they actually mean. In this regard, for javanese parents, allowing their children to speak *Bahasa Indonesia* instead of *Krama* to older people does not mean it reflects family's reputation of being failed to raise children. The chance here is that it reflects family's shift of being raised by working- class parental values, but once they have grew up and build their own family, they wanted to have middle-class parental values for their children-parents relationship.

### **Language shift brought by parental values**

One of Smith-Hefner's interview participant mentioned that he thought using *krama* is not communicative, even though her parents are constantly remind him to use it. It has been a concern for parents too that it might reflect family's poor reputation among neighbours and other family relatives. Yet, the parents were in the situation in the past, when they were young, they had been shouted out if they do not use proper *krama*, thus they somehow now reject those aspect of feudalism and patriarchy and choose to mainly speak *Bahasa Indonesia* with their son. From the survey of



Smith-Hefner conducted, out of 206 students who answered the question, only 11% who speak *krama* with their grandparents, and the rest are using *Bahasa Indonesia*.

Different ethnic background might come different in this case of language shift, where parental values could work in general for eastern or western. But in Indonesia, the use of many types of *Bahasa Indonesia* is an integral part of symbolic lifestyle of middle-class identity. Even not many young people could afford middle-class consumerism (Smith-Hefner, 2009), which reflects a strong correlation that the language shift of *krama* to *Bahasa Indonesia* exist because of the choice made by the parents. As a developing country, Indonesia's growing economy does not support most citizen to have middle-class lifestyle but it is certainly a growing number, thus it is not a new thing that language shift happens as according to Oetomo (1990), language is among the main things that will adjust to people's identity when they are in the initial stage of adopting the new urban middle-class stratification. The following figure is my attempt in demonstrating that social position relates to the shift of *karma* to *Bahasa Indonesia* based on Kohn's interpretative model which draw social class and its impact;

**Social Class**



**Condition of life**



**Values → directed by parents**



**Behaviour → adopting a middle-class stratification**



**Language use**

Figure 1. Kohn's Interpretative Model

A strong correlation between children-parents relationship that cause language shift from *Krama* to *Bahasa Indonesia* might happen differently to families in the different country. As in Indonesia, parents-children relationship is mostly a strong bond such as the children will start move out from the house if they get into the university or a job outside the home city or when they finally get married. Indonesian parents are also holding an authority that dominates their children's action, where they are fully responsible in deciding what kind of parental values they desire to build a type of characteristic that they feel possible to be developed (Kohn, 1963).

## **CONCLUSION**

It can be a practical solution to divide Indonesia's society between "middle class" and "working class", as it can be a way to reach the more specific society to help conservating Indonesia's language heritage. Indonesia's middle class is small but growing. As time goes by, there is a chance where Javanese children will be raised by parents who do not mind if their children speak *Bahasa Indonesia* to them and older people. It will not be measured as someone is behaving impolite and language then will not be seen as a form of superiority among gender. However, this is a threat for *krama* as Indonesia's language heritage that might vanish. In the context of family communication, future research might want to try to see if parental social class can help the generation to maintain a nation's language heritage regardless of their social class stratification as well as make a clear differentiation between working class and middle class based on Indonesia's society condition.

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