

***THESIS ARTICLE***

**Language Choice among Bilingual Students of Different Ethnic  
Backgrounds**

**(An Ethnographic Study at FKIP University of Mataram)**



*Submitted as a Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for Sarjana Degree in  
English Education Department Faculty of Teacher Training and Education  
Mataram University*

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TEACHER TRAINING AND EDUCATION  
ENGLISH DEPARTMENT  
2015**

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The jurnal entitled

**Language Choice among Bilingual Students of Different Ethnic Backgrounds  
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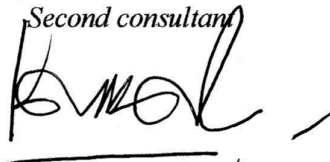
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## JURNAL HASIL PENELITIAN

# Language Choice among Bilingual Students of Different Ethnic Backgrounds

(An Ethnographic Study at FKIP University of Mataram)

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### ABSTRACT

This study is aimed at investigating the languages used by the bilingual students at FKIP; their linguistic patterns, and the factors that influence their language choice. Convenience sampling was used to take the samples, i.e. bilingual students of English Department who came from different ethnic groups and mastered English, Indonesian, and their mother tongues. They were also in the same social group in terms of their closeness in and outside the classroom.. Ethnographic research was applied in this study. The methods to collect data were observation (participant and non-participant), recordings, note takings, and questionnaire. The result of this study showed that the languages used by bilingual students at FKIP are Indonesian, English, Sasak,Sundanese, and Korean. The linguistic patterns appeared to be different from one another and greatly influenced by Topics, Participants, and Settings of the conversations. In discussing about education, they used Indonesian and in talking about free topic such as movies, they used English, Indonesian, and other languages. They spoke in English with their English lecturers, but the conversations among them used Indonesian and English. In classroom, they used English mostly, but outside the classroom Indonesian was used dominantly. Education domain dictates that English is used frequently in the classroom and to their English lecturer. This study showed the percentage of Indonesian used by calculating 2154 words that appeared in recorded data in terms of Topics, Participants, and Settings are 71,1%, 36,2 %, and 50,8%. While the percentage of English use based on the same order 17,5%, 60,3%, and 49,1%. While the other languages such as Sasak, Sundanese, and Korean appeared in a very less number; it is less than 10%. This is understandable because only few of them spoke those languages. However, it is also found that the language choice of bilingual speakers was also influenced by other factors such as individual preferences, contextual setting, and linguistic proficiency.

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Key words: Language Choice, Bilingual Speakers, Factors InfluencingLanguage Choice

## ABSTRAK

Penelitian ini bertujuan menyelidiki bahasa-bahasa yang dipakai oleh siswa penutur dwibahasa di FKIP, bagaimana pola bahasa mereka, dan faktor apa saja yang mempengaruhi pilihan bahasanya. Convenience sample digunakan dalam mengambil sampel yakni siswa penutur dwibahasa dari program studi Bahasa Inggris yang berasal dari kelompok etnik yang berbeda dan menguasai Bahasa Inggris, Bahasa Indonesia, dan bahasa ibu mereka. Mereka juga termasuk dalam kelompok sosial yang sama dalam hal kedekatan mereka di dalam dan di luar kelas. Penelitian ini menggunakan teknik penelitian etnography Metode untuk mengumpulkan data adalah: pengamatan (pengamatan terlibat dan pengamatan tak terlibat), rekaman, catatan, dan kuisioner. Hasil penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa bahasa-bahasa yang digunakan oleh para siswa penutur dwibahasa di FKIP adalah Bahasa Inggris, Bahasa Indonesia, Bahasa Sasak, dan Bahasa Sunda, dan Bahasa Korea. Pola bahasa yang mereka pergunakan kelihatannya berbeda satu dengan yang lain dan juga sangat ditentukan oleh topik, peserta, dan tempat terjadinya percakapan tersebut. Penelitian ini juga menunjukkan bahwa pilihan bahasa para penutur dwibahasa di FKIP ditentukan oleh topik, peserta, dan tempat terjadinya percakapan tersebut. Dalam mendiskusikan topic pendidikan, mereka menggunakan Bahasa Indonesia dan dalam topik bebas seperti film, mereka menggunakan Bahasa Inggris, Bahasa Indonesia dan bahasa yang lain. Mereka berbicara dalam Bahasa Inggris dengan dosen Bahasa Inggris mereka, tapi pembicaraan antar teman terjadi dalam Bahasa Indonesia dan Bahasa Inggris. Dalam kelas mereka biasanya menggunakan Bahasa Inggris, tapi di luar kelas Bahasa Indonesia lebih sering digunakan. Domain pendidikan menyebutkan bahwa Bahasa Inggris akan lebih sering digunakan dalam kelas dan kepada dosen. Penelitian ini menunjukkan penggunaan Bahasa Indonesia dengan menghitung 2154 kata yang muncul dalam data rekaman berdasarkan Topics, Particiants, And Settings sebanyak 71,1%, 36,2%, dan 50,8%. Penggunaan Bahasa Inggris berdasarkan ketiga faktor itu adalah sebanyak 17,5%, 60,3%, dan 49,1%. Sementara penggunaan bahasa yang lain seperti Bahasa Sasak, Sunda, dan Korea muncul sangat sedikit, kurang dari 10%. Ini dapat dimengerti karena hanya beberapa diantara mereka yang menguasai bahasa tersebut. Meskipun begitu, penelitian ini juga menemukan bahwa pilihan bahasa dari penutur dwibahasa juga di pengaruhi oleh faktor- faktor seperti faktor keinginan individu, keadaan contex , dan penguasaan bahasa.

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Kata kunci: Pilihan Bahasa, Penutur Dwibahasa, Faktor yang Mempengaruhi Pilihan Bahasa

## A. INTRODUCTION

Language is an important device which is used by human to develop communication. Language as means for communication has been used by people around the world to exchange ideas and culture.

As Edward Sapir in Mahyuni (2006:12) defined language as follows: "Language is a purely human and non-instinctive method of communicating ideas, emotions, and desires by means of a system of voluntarily produced symbols". (1949).

One can say that language makes people from different ethnics and races understand each other better. Humans use language to define themselves and state their thought so that misunderstanding between people can be avoided as well as possible. Language spoken in the world is numerous and vary from one place to another place. Not only it is different between countries but also it is different from one region to another region. What more fascinating is the fact that in one language a variation can still be found.

The researcher noted that there is an interesting phenomenon happens in bilingual interaction when a conversation takes place between bilingual speakers

that come from, for example, Sasak ethnic, Bimanese, Sumbawanese, or people who come from English department. Code switching and code mixing are phenomenon that unavoidable to happen to ease the exchange process. Rather more interesting is that when people who come from the same ethnic, i.e. sasak ethnic, happen to be involved in a conversation, they switch their language to their mother tongue in which the other interlocutors who come from different ethnics have no idea what they are

talking about. The language choice that made by the participants in this research during the conversation are very fascinating. They are students of English Department who came from different ethnic groups, and also mastered more than one language including English.

Moreover, the interesting questions are: why people act like the above case, what motivate them to choose one language over the other languages, what factors that influencing their choices and in what conditions they prefer one language than another language. More thrilling question is that what their intended meaning in doing so. These kind of questions are interesting to be studied further. Therefore, the researcher

conducts this study for personal reason that this language phenomenon is interesting to her most among other language phenomena.

The research questions of this study are: what languages used by bilingual students of different ethnic backgrounds at FKIP UNRAM, what their linguistic patterns of those bilingual students, and what factors influence their choices.

The purposes of this study are: identifying the languages used by the bilingual students of different ethnic background at FKIP UNRAM, identifying what the linguistic patterns of those bilingual students, and identifying what factors influence their choices

## **B. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

There is no definition about bilingual and multilingual that has been agreed by the linguists. Each of them has different opinion on whom can be called as bilinguals. Hakuta, et al (2006:115) suggests that bilinguals are individuals or groups of people who obtain communicative skills, with various degrees of proficiency, in oral and/or written forms, in order to interact with speakers of one or more languages in a given society. However, many linguists believe that what so-called bilingual is not simply speaking more than one language, but it is far complicated than that. Myers-Scotton (2006) believes that what is needed to be called bilingual is that one should master two kinds of linguistics competence which are grammatical and communicative competence. Therefore, she suggests that

bilingualism is the ability to use two or more languages sufficiently by mastering the linguistics competence to carry on a limited casual conversation.

As defined above, the bilingual speakers along with the advantages that they gain from their ability to speak more than one language have given them a large possibility of language choice. They can overcome the communication problems such as miscommunication that may happen in the conversation. More importantly, it can reduce social distance among the interlocutors. It also gives them a great deal of access to manipulate, maintain and explore the language the way they want to be presented by the language they speak.

In this case, a bilingual speaker who happens to have conversation with the people from other countries who speak different language from him/her will have the advantage to maintain the conversation if she/he has mastered the language that sufficient to handle the conversation.

Dumanig (2007) in David (2008:219) stated that there are some factors that are considered by bilingual speakers in

terms of their language choice. They are a speaker's first language, community language, age, education, role-relationships, ethnicity, dominant language, and social status, economic and political position of the linguistic group and the neutrality of language. Some may argue that the bilingual speakers tend to use their first language. There are many recent studies of the language choice of a bilingual speakers in which the researchers find it interesting to discover bilinguals strategy in holding communication.

The language that is chosen by speakers during the exchange is influenced by many things including the interlocutors. The case in which the speakers changed the way they speak according to the person they are talking to is commonly called speech accommodation theory or most likely called communication accommodation theory (CAT). It was designed in order to accommodate motivational accounts for linguistic variation that happen in intergroup communication. Hornberger and McKay (2010) suggested that specifically, accommodation refers to interlocutors' speech adjustments that may exhibit behavioral convergence with or divergence from the interlocutor's (displayed or assumed) speech.

According to Mesthrie, et al (2009) The speakers accommodated to their interlocutors in two ways namely converge and diverge strategies of communication.

#### A. Convergence

The speakers tend to converge or willing to adopt similar styles of speaking with their interlocutors when they intend to reduce social distance between one another.

#### B. Divergence

The speakers intend to speak differently (diverge) to their interlocutors when they wish to emphasize their distinctiveness or to increase their social distance.

There are some studies that have been conducted on the field of sociolinguistics in order to gain a better understanding on language and its relation and function in the society. The study on language choice among bilingual speakers is also often conducted.

The more recent study investigating about language choice in bilingual speaker conducted by Farmer (2008) Language Choices of English L1 Learners in a Westren Cape High School by using particular high school students in which they speak different language in various occasions. It showed the language variation that they use and in what way they use English and other languages. This study found out that one of the language that they possessed namely, English, is stongly influence their language choice and their linguistic identity.

From the previous definitions, it can be assumed that language takes a very significant functions in society in which that language is used. From those studies above, the language choice of the bilingual speakers is greatly influenced by the external and internal factors where the speakers are surrounded. Those factors such as the social status, ethnic backgrnd, the topic, and the interlocutors will determine how they want to continue the conversation.

It also indicates that a speaker is very vulnerable to the language influence. One cannot constantly use their first language if she/he has been exposure by other languages. Therefore, language shift is supposed to happen as a way to adapt the language exhibition. Another phenomena such as code switching, language death, language maintenance are greatly appear as linguistic cases.

### C. RESEARCH METHOD

This study was conducted by applying the principles and methods of an ethnography study. Observation, recording the data, giving questionnaire, and note taking are

some of the technique which was used in this research. The method to analyze the data in this research also employed the method of an ethnography research.

According to data that was taken from administrative staffs, the total number of FKIP population is 4559 people which consisted of students from all majors department, the lecturers, and the administration staffs. However, the subjects that was chosen in this study was the bilingual students of English Department. They were chosen because they have more language variety. They came from different ethnic group so they spoke different mother tongues. Beside their mother tongues, they also spoke in fluent English and Indonesian. Thus, they spoke in three different languages. They were in same social group and interact in daily basis.

Data in this study was gained through some methods and techniques of data collection that was commonly used in ethnographic study. They are :

Observation (Participant Non-Participant Observation), Recording, Note Taking, and Questionnaire. The procedures of qualitative analysis was applied in this research.

The data which was taken from the study was analyzed qualitatively. The procedures of qualitative analysis was applied in this research.

The procedures were :

1. Identify the languages used by the bilingual speakers from the recorded data.

2. Categorize the language that used by the speaker to which group of language it belongs i.e. sasaknese, sumbawanese, english, or other languages.

3. Identify the linguistic pattern of those bilingual speakers.

4. Identify the factors that influence the language choice by the bilingual and reviewing the result of questionnaire taken from the participants. Also, the note that taken during observation may as well be analyzed for gaining more linguistic data.

5. The researcher will give the narrative description about the result of the study in terms of language used by the research participants, the linguistic pattern of bilingual speakers at fkip in interaction, and factors determine the language choice from the recorded data that has been identified and analyzed before.

6. Explanation of the data that has been gathered by relating them to the linguistic theories and researches and researchers' self-knowledge.

## **D. DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION**

It has been mentioned in the previous chapter that this study is aimed to identify the language choice by the bilingual speakers at FKIP; what their linguistic pattern; and the factors influencing their language choice. The data were taken from 5th of November 2014 to 29th of December 2014 . The data were gathered by employing an ethnographic method which was observation (participant observation and non-participant observation), recording, note taking, and questionnaire.

In this study, the participants were the bilingual speakers of English Department. They mastered more than one languages including English. They came from different ethnic groups.



They were member of the same social. They came from Sasak, Sumbawanese, Sundanese and Javanese. The recorded data is described in these table below.

Table 1 : The Language Use by Bilingual Speakers at FKIP Mataram University

No	Language	N of W	Percentage (%)
1	Indonesian	1212	56,3%
2	English	837	38,8%
3	Mother Tongue/ other languages	105	4,9%
Total		2154	100%

NB: N of W : Number of Words that appeared

From the table, it showed that 56,3% of language that apperead is Indonesian,

38,8% is English and 4,9% is the other languages. From the data above, it can be implied that the languages that are used by the bilingual speakers at FKIP are Indonesian, English, and other languages. From the questionnaire given during the study it also indicates that each respondents has at least mastered two languages; they are Indonesian and English.

From the questionnaire that had been gathered, it indicates that the language that they frequently used is Indonesian. They answered that in different setting, they mostly used Indonesian to communicate, for example at home, classroom, and to certain interlocutors. Therefore, the linguistic pattern used in this bilingual interaction is different from one another.

## Factors Determining Language Choice

### (Extract 1: Free Topic)

Participants : Students and students  
Topic : Earthquake

Setting : Outside classroom

Duration : about 5 minutes

Q : Gempa

(earthquake)

P : what's going on?

(what is going on?)

S: Iya, kalau orang Sasak bilang ni

*lindur*

(yes, if people Sasak call

DEF

*lindur*)

(well, Sasak people call it

an earthquake)

N: Apa kalian

bilang? (what 3PL

say?)

(what do you

say) Q : *Lindur*

( an earthquake)

N : Apa Januar bilang?

(what Januar say)

(what do you call earthquake in

Sundanese?)

P : gempa itu *Lini,*

*aya lini aya lini*

(earthquake DEF earthquake

DEF earthquake)

(earthquake in Sundanese is

called

*Lini*; there is an earthquake)

We can conclude that topic gives a great influence to the speaker's language choice. They may use Indonesian at first but the change in the topic of conversation will eventually change their choices in language in which the y considered more appropriate to be used in certain topic. This is the way the speaker

accommodate their speak to certain topics.

We can see how the participants differ their language choices when talking to the other students and when talking to a lecturer. In the questionnaire that are given to the participants, when being asked whether the interlocutors influence their language choice, the answer to this question is 100% of them answered "yes". Also, when the participants were asked what influences their language choices most, four of them answered the interlocutors or the participants of conversation itself. This by all means refers to the assumption that participants influence the language choice of the bilingual speakers.

#### **(EXTRACT 2. Settings : Classroom)**

*Participants* : Lecturer and students  
*Topic* : suitable learning method  
*Setting* : Classroom  
*Duration* : about 25 minutes

P: dua belas  
(twelve)

Lecturer: for young learner, you cannot use complicated game. You should use a fun and simple game.

P :Nggih  
(yes, mam)

Lecturer : the other caution is that it may look great on the paper but it doesn't necessarily run well. It needs to be modified.

P : yes  
mam

Lecturer : oke, any comment?

In the classroom they used English all the time and remotely used Indonesian, while other languages such as Sasak, Sundanese, and Korean did not

use. It showed that the bilingual speakers switched their language because of some factors; setting of the conversation is believed to determine the language choice of speakers. However, in the questionnaire, from seven participants, only one person answered that the setting is the factor that influence her language choice most. But, when being asked whether the setting of the conversation influence their language, six of them answered "yes". The recorded data and the questionnaire, however remote, support the assumption that the setting influences the language choice of bilingual speakers.

#### **4.3 Discussion**

The data showed that language used by the bilingual speakers at FKIP were Indonesian, English, Sasak, Sundanese and Korean however remote, they appeared in the conversation. In the data, English and Indonesian were used in full meaningful conversation and could maintain the conversation. While, Sasak, Sundanese and Korean were used in form of simple sentences and expressions and could not be continued by the other participants because they had limited access to these language.

The linguistic pattern of the participants is different from one person to another person. It is also different in certain condition. However, from the observation, recordings, and from the questionnaire, it can be seen that the participants tended to use Indonesian to begin the conversation. Then, the participants adapted their choice to the flow of conversation and went back-fourth to Indonesian

and English. Also, there was a remote chance of Sasak, Sundanese, even Korean used by the speakers. Their common linguistic pattern is the used of Indonesian and English. However, it can change due to the factors that influencing the speakers' choices.

The table below shows the percentage of languages used by the bilingual speakers based on the factors influencing them.

*Table 6. Language Choice among Bilingual Speakers at FKIP based on*

*The Factors Influencing Them*

Language	Factors		
	Topics	Participants	Settings
Indonesian	66,5%	26,5%	35,1%
English	25,6%	72,4%	64,9%
Sasak	6,2%	0,1%	0%
Sundanese	1%	0%	0%
Korean	0,5%	0,2%	0%

From the table above, it can be indicated that the use of Indonesian is

66,5% at Topics, 26,5% at Participants and 35,1% at Settings. While, the use of English is also large in which on Topic, Participants and Setting, it gets 25,6%, 72,4%, and 64,9%. Eventhough, Indonesian is used widely in the conversation between the bilingual speakers at FKIP, but English also exclusively used in certain condition particularly in classroom. While the number of percentage of languages such as Sasak, Sundanese, and Korean are quiet low. But the chances to these

languages to appear are largely dependent in the Topic of conversation. It can be seen in the percentage in the data above where it is less than 10%. In this case, Sasak is 7% of the whole number, and the other two share the rest percentage.

In conclusion, the assumption that language choice of bilingual speakers is influenced by the Topic, Participants, and Setting is believed to has been proven considerably.

The data showed that in term of Topic, for example the conversation about education subject, they use Indonesian entirely. However, when the conversation about movies, the speakers spoke in Indonesian, English, sasak, and other languages. Another data suggested that participant influence the language choice by presenting that the use of English increases sufficiently when they talked with their English teacher. Domain dictates that in education situation, there are expected factors in this case the expected language use by the participant is English; English was used exclusively because they were talking with their English lecturer. Whereas, when they talked with their friends, the languages used are Indonesian, Sasak, English, and others. The similiar cases happen in the

bilingual interaction influenced by Settings. They used English and Indonesian in the classroom; but when they were outside classroom, they used Indonesian.

While the other factors in which Pavlenko defined as "individual, contextual, and linguistic" are greatly influenced the bilingual speakers's language choice as well. In the questionnaire, the participants also acknowledged that their language choice

is influenced by their ideas and what languages they considered to be the most effective in conveying their meaning. They also acknowledged that they often have difficulties to state their ideas in one language because of the complicated linguistic factors and felt more comfort to state their ideas in another languages.

#### **D. CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS**

The conclusion of this study are : there are five languages in bilingual conversations of English department students namely; Indonesian, English, Sasak, and other languages (Sundanese and Korean). Although, the other languages appeared in simple sentences and expressions and also it is remotely used by the speakers either concerning Topics, Settings, or Participants, the linguistic patterns of bilingual speakers at FKIP are different from one another and toward certain factors. It is greatly influenced by Topic, Setting, and Participant of the conversation. However, they mostly used Indonesian in the conversation taking place outside or inside classroom and in different topic and participant. English is mostly use in the conversation that takes place in the classroom and to speak to their English lecturer. Sasak and other languages are used in the topic conversation about movie (free topic), he study found that Topics, Participants, and Settings of conversation do influence the language choice of bilingual speakers. It is indicated from the number of languages that used and the percentage of those languages. Indonesian used based on Topics, Participants, and Settings are 71,1%, 36,2 %, and 50,8%. While the percentage of English use based on the same order 17,5%, 60,3%, and 49,1%. While the other languages such as Sasak, Sundanese, and Korean appeared in a

very small number; it is less than 10%. It is also found that besides these three factors; there are factors that significantly influenced the language choice of bilingual speakers at FKIP; they are individual, contextual, and linguistic factors. Code switching and code mixing also appeared in the conversations.

The suggestion of this study are or the next researcher who interested in the same topic, the complete understanding of the topic and a careful explanation of every aspects is needed to get an objective and clear result, the further elaboration on this topic in terms of aspects that relate to the study is needed. The future researcher should consider different point of view concerning this topic in order to enrich the linguistics' galleries of knowledge and to get a better understanding on the language choice.

Note : This article was made based on the writer' thesis with the guidance from:

Prof.Drs.Mahyuni,M.A.,Ph.D and  
Drs. Kamluddin Yusra, M.A.,Ph.D

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