

HOW PARENTS FOSTER BILINGUALISM IN THE FAMILY: A CASE STUDY OF AN INDONESIAN STUDENT FAMILY IN PERTH, WESTERN AUSTRALIA

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Abstract

This study investigated how Indonesian children in Australia as a foreign country temporarily switch their Indonesian language with English, what parents' attitudes toward the children's language is, and how Indonesian parents encourage the use of Bahasa Indonesia by their children at home (in Australia). A case study method with qualitative approach was used. Participants of the study were one family of Indonesian students comprising a 35-year-old mother with 6 and 8-year-old sons. The mother was chosen because she was considered as repositories of culture and responsible for the maintenance of tradition and language. Data collected through observation and open-ended interview. The study showed that the Indonesian children soon adopted English and gradually lost their mother language because of their less frequent use and interaction with the users. The Indonesian mother had to struggle to maintain her children's mother tongue, since she and her family planed to go back to Indonesia. Parents had to make an effort to maintain their children's Indonesian language skills. Use of mother tongue as the home language considered to be a good way to foster children's Indonesian use. This could help the children re-learning Indonesian they had a good understanding of it.

Keywords: bilingualism, mother tongue, foreign language, language maintenance, language lost.

Chapter 1: Introduction

The Indonesian students who are doing PhD or Masters Programs in Australian universities usually bring their families to Australia as well. Their children usually attend public schools in Australia. Consequently, the children will learn English, which is the language of instruction in those schools and in the community. As a result, the children may be very fluent in English and forget their mother tongue. The problem comes when the Indonesian students must return to

their home country, where English is not used as the daily language, soon after completing their study.

It is actually crucial for Indonesian parents to realize that sometimes the mother tongue can be at risk of being lost. For example; if people live in another country where the community use a language (say, English) other than their mother tongue, it can be sure that their children will use English more than their mother tongue (Romaine, 1999). So, Bahasa Indonesia as their mother tongue will

be at risk because the use of it in this situation (that is, in Australia) is less frequent. As a result, without use and maintenance of the mother tongue by the parents, gradually the mother tongue of the children will be less used and then lost (Harding and Riley, 1986; Baker, 1996; Fishman, 2004).

On one hand, for Indonesian parents, their children's proficiency in the English language is very beneficial for their future careers. On the other hand, those children may lose their mother tongue (Bahasa Indonesia) as a consequence of learning English. Some evidence says that immigrant children (both permanent and temporary) who learn English in school may have first-language attrition or loss as a result of becoming assimilated into the English-speaking environment in the schools or society (Fillmore, 1991; Siegel, 2004; Kuncha and Bathula, 2004).

It is actually important for the family of Indonesian students in overseas countries, such as Australia, to maintain their children's mother tongue because they have to return to Indonesia in a couple of years. It seems so hard for those Indonesian students to keep their children fluent in Bahasa Indonesia because they are surrounded by the English language. Hoffman (1991) observed that under certain cultural, social, educational and political conditions, a community might change its language to another. Moreover, Hoffman (1991, p.186) said that "... when a community does not maintain its language but gradually adopts another one".

Research Aims

This present study is important because it seeks to look particularly at parents' attitudes towards the children's language. It also develops a better understanding about how Indonesian parents encourage the use of Bahasa Indonesia by their children at home (in Australia).

Research question

This study asks a single question, which is then divided into four sub-questions:

How do Indonesian parents maintain their mother tongue?

1. What are their attitudes toward Bahasa Indonesia and English?
2. What strategies do they have to maintain Bahasa Indonesia?
3. What do they actually do to encourage the use of their mother tongue?
4. What are the difficulties arising from their efforts?

Chapter 2: Literature review

2.1. Language maintenance issues

Migrant families come from all over the world to settle in other countries at various times and for various reasons. Whether those families stay permanently or temporarily, they need to deal with language maintenance if their first language is other than the language of the community. According to Baker (1996, p.43), language maintenance "refers to relative language stability in its number and distribution of speakers, its proficient usage in children and adults, and to retaining the use of the language in

specific domains (e.g. home, school, religion).”

People need to maintain their original language because language is not only a tool of communication but it can also show people’s cultural identity (Fishman, 2001). Moreover, Fishman (2001) said that one generation needs to pass the language to the following generation. It can be understood that the language of a minority group will die as a result of less use by its community (Rohani et al., 2005). Rohani et al. (2005) added that soon after the children of a family participate in school-related activities and communicate with the majority language, their attitudes toward their heritage language will change and they will use it less.

Some researchers such as Baker (1996) and Rohani et al. (2005) remarked that attitudes toward the mother tongue and language maintenance vary from one community to another and from one family to another. Some families are enthusiastic when their children acquire the second language quickly. Others are worried that their children shift totally to the other language and then they try to find ways to maintain their children’s first language.

Parents concerned about the language maintenance of their children, while settling in a community that has a different language from their own, will generally find ways to keep their children fluent in their mother tongue. Some strategies such as communicating with children by using the mother tongue and introducing the original culture to them may be implemented

(Harding and Riley, 1986). The success of language maintenance probably depends on the attitudes of parents towards the first language (Baker, 1996). Parents may need to make the mother tongue the home language in order to make children use it more. In the other words, the home can be used as the base of language maintenance (Harding and Riley, 1986).

2.2. Receptive bilingualism

It seems difficult for parents to maintain their children’s language while living in a country where the dominant language that is used by the community is different. Although parents may make some efforts to make their children speak their mother tongue, the results may not be successful. As a consequence of the failure of parents to make their children use the mother tongue, their children may only understand their first language but they cannot use it for communication (Harding and Riley, 1986). Harding and Riley (1986) stressed that this situation, called ‘receptive bilingualism’, is common. It means that “the individual concerned understand the language, but cannot, will not or does not speak it” (p.43).

It is common among receptive bilingual children to reply to their parents speaking with the language they know better (Harding and Riley, 1986). For example, Indonesian children who live in the Australian community tend to reply their parents, who speak Bahasa Indonesia, with English. These Indonesian children may understand perfectly what their parents are saying,

but in the circumstances where they use the language less, they tend to be incapable of speaking the language (Baker, 1996).

Although it is easier said than done to maintain the children's mother tongue, Harding and Riley (1986) suggested that parents should maintain it, especially the ones who decide to move back to their home country soon. Harding and Riley (1986) also pointed out that although children may only be able to read the language, and not use it for a communication tool, when they return to their home country they can develop their speaking and writing abilities quickly with only a little difficulty. This can be good news for parents for maintaining their children's first language if they make a decision to return to their country of origin after a number of years in other countries.

2.3. Previous studies

There is a growing number of researches about the importance for families to maintain their children's original language. Research conducted by Nicoladis and Grabois (2002), which used a 17-month-old adopted Chinese child, proved that language loss could take place quite rapidly for a child of this age. It was reported that gradually, day by day, this child acquired English without difficulty. Nicoladis and Grabois (2002) then stressed that the possibility of language loss can begin as early as toddler stage.

Research carried out by Fillmore (1991) and Bhela (2003) revealed that the patterns of language use in a family change soon after the children learn

English. Moreover, Fillmore (1991) said that the younger the children are when they learn English, the quicker English has an effect on their primary language. Fillmore also stated that this situation may crucially happen at ages younger than 5, because children have not reached a stable condition of their language acquisition. Since children do not care about prestige and status, they simply use the language that gives them more access to their environment. They then easily give up their primary language.

Siegel's study (2004) exposed that parents and society have significant roles in maintaining a child's original language. This study was supported by Bhela (2003) who showed that although there are some strong attempts by immigrant families to ensure that their children become knowledgeable in their primary language, such as using the mother tongue as the home language; their children gradually show increasing reluctance to use their mother tongue as the tool of communication.

Harding and Riley, who studied French and English societies (1986), found that immigrant families who deal with the matter of language maintenance will usually face a number of problems. In many cases, the mother tongue of the family is not considered as 'a high status foreign language', so this family obviously concentrates more on the dominant language in the society. Additionally, if parents do not maintain the bilingualism of their children, in a short time their children will lose their mother tongue. Harding and Riley

(1986) suggested that there is no basis for the belief that certain languages are better and more prestigious than others, which is why parents should make any efforts to maintain their children's primary language. Hence, no parents will say "We tried bilingualism, but it didn't work" (p.79).

It was suggested by Rohani et al. (2005) that attitudes and actions within the family had a significant influence on the maintenance of the mother tongue. In their research, Rohani et al. (2005) found that the role of family in language maintenance was both explicit, through purposeful actions intended to help children learn and maintain their language, and implicit, such as the language environment of the home or through access to greater communities of first language speakers.

Chapter 3: Methodology

2.1. Subjects

The participants of the study were only one family of Indonesian students, consisting of a 35-year-old mother with 6 and 8-year-old sons. The reason why the mother was chosen is "because they are considered as repositories of culture and responsible for the maintenance of tradition and language" (Kuncha & Bathula, 2004, p.3). Both children attend an Australian public school. The request of this family was that if they were interviewed, the names of the family would not be mentioned. This study will use the terms 'Mrs. P' for the mother, 'A' for the first son and 'B' for the second son.

This family actually came from different language backgrounds. The father came from East Kalimantan (Borneo Island) and the mother came from Yogyakarta (Java Island). They worked in South Kalimantan. Both parents speak their own dialects and Bahasa Indonesia. So, they communicate by using Bahasa Indonesia. (Moreover, the community of South Kalimantan speaks a different dialect from the one of East Kalimantan.) Consequently, the only language that the children use to communicate with their parents and other people is Bahasa Indonesia.

2.2. Method of data collection and analysis

Creswell (2005) stated that a qualitative method is believed superior for this type of study because its approach recognizes that reality is socially and subjectively constructed rather than being determined objectively. Based on Creswell's statement, the present study was conducted using the qualitative method. In terms of educational research, Creswell (2005, p.39) mentioned more specifically that qualitative research is:

"A type of educational research in which the researcher relies on the views of participants, asks broad, general questions, collects data consisting largely of words (or text) from participants, describes and analysis these words for themes, and conducts the inquiry in a subjective biased manner".

Since this study is a qualitative study, the emphasis is on gathering rich information about a small number

of people or organizations rather than a limited amount of information about a large number of people or organizations (Creswell, 2005; Cohen, 2005).

The case study method was used for this study because it offered a method to observe phenomena in detail and was relatively unencumbered by theoretical bias (Cohen, 2004). The interpretive method would also be carried out in this study since the writer constructed the meaning of the data based upon her interpretation and knowledge (Creswell, 2005). This method allowed the writer to produce descriptive data that is the result of the written or spoken words of the participants and other observable data resources (Taylor and Bogdan, 1998).

This study incorporated two types of data collection: interviews and observations. In this study, the open-ended interview was used. Creswell (2005, p.214) noticed that by using the open-ended interview "the participant can best voice their experiences unconstrained by any perspectives of the researchers or past research findings". It meant that the mother had maximum freedom to express her opinions. The interview was tape-recorded. The record was later transcribed into English.

The children were observed only to avoid making them feel uncomfortable with the interview situation. In this study, the writer positioned herself as a non-participant observer: she conducted an observation without being part of it (Cohen at al., 2004). The specific content of the observation was focused on the

children's actual behavior in various conversations, such as conversations with each other, peers, other people and their mother. The writer answered the research questions based on those interviews and observation data.

1.3. Procedure

The writer conducted the interview with the mother in her house. This interview was done in Bahasa Indonesia and in Bahasa Indonesia Gaul (colloquial language). Sometimes, we used the Javanese language into our conversation because both of us came from the same region in Indonesia. All the interview data was tape-recorded. The writer also did telephone and e-mail interviews to get the addition information that was needed. All the interview data was transcribed into Bahasa Indonesia and then translated into English.

The observations were conducted on different occasions, which approximately took 20-30 minutes each. It also depended on the appointments with Mrs. P. In answering the questions, the writer used her interpretation and knowledge, which are supported by the observation data available.

1.4. Limitation of the research.

Firstly, the interviews were conducted using Bahasa Indonesia, Bahasa Indonesia Gaul (colloquial language) and Javanese dialect. The data were transcribed into Bahasa Indonesia and then translated into English. This meant that some meanings might have been lost in the process of translation.

However, using Bahasa Indonesia was the request of the mother as the respondent of this study. The mother said that she could voice out her ideas more clearly and comfortably by using Bahasa Indonesia. Although it took a long time, after the process of the data transcription, the writer translated the Bahasa Indonesian transcription into English.

Secondly, due to the limited time available, the writer only interviewed one family to get the data. This study would have been richer if the interviewed was carried out with more than one family.

Thirdly, in this study, the writer positioned herself as a non-participant observer only to keep the children comfortable. This study would have been better if the writer could have positioned herself as part of those children's activities (participant observer) such as playing with them, so richer data could have been gathered.

Chapter 4: Findings

4.1. Mrs. P's family

Two years ago, Mrs. P's family moved to Australia for study reasons. Mr. P has a scholarship to study in an Australian university for four years. Mr. P spends time in the university laboratory. He goes to the university in the morning and comes home at night. Mrs. P is a housewife. She works part-time to earn some money. She also takes an English course at TAFE to kill time and to improve her English. According to the writer, her English is good.

In daily activities, Mrs. P takes more responsibility for her sons because her husband is busy. The children spend most of their time with their mother, except at weekends when their father stays at home. At weekends, they go to church or go shopping together.

The children, A and B, go to a government school which is not too far from their house. It takes only 10 minutes for Mrs. P to bring the children to school by car. After dropping the children at school, Mrs. P still has time to reach her workplace or her English course. She does this activity every day except on school holidays.

4.2. Attitudes towards Bahasa Indonesia and English

After six months of living in Australia, the children acquired English fluently because they learnt it at school. At first, Mrs. P felt amazed to see how quickly their children acquired the language even from day one at school.

"I could not believe when they went back from their school and they said 'Mommy, how are you?' and 'Mommy, I am hungry'. I was very happy at that time. I meant they learnt English well. In the following day when I dropped them school, they said 'Speak English mom ... it is at school'. They wanted me to speak English only at their school area ..."

At around 12 months, Mrs. P realized that their children spoke English almost all the time at home. They still spoke Bahasa Indonesia especially with their parents. They

spoke more English each other and their friends around the house. Mrs. P sometimes listened to the children's conversation, which used English. Even, Mrs. P learnt how to speak English from them.

"Honestly, at the beginning I thought if their English was good they could easily deal with all their school activities. They could do their homeworks or story telling that acquired them to speak English. I could also learn how to speak English from them".

Mrs. P was happy because she knew that English is essential for her children to face today's world. So, she encouraged her children to learn English and spoke English all the time. English was also important for their children because they lived in Australia.

"I think English is important because they live in Australia. When we go back to Indonesia, I do not need to put them in the English course after school because they already know it. They will get jobs easier someday when they are growing, if they know English very well".

Mrs. P then realized that her children were increasingly reluctant to speak Bahasa Indonesia at home. The children then started speaking Bahasa Indonesia only with their parents. At that time, Mrs. P became conscious that her children someday will lose their Bahasa Indonesia, but they need to go back to Indonesia soon after Mr. P finishes his study. Mrs. P subsequently realized how important

Bahasa Indonesia for her children was, thus she encouraged the children to speak Bahasa Indonesia but did not force them to.

"At that time, I started thinking that my kids will not be able to speak Bahasa Indonesia anymore. When they go back to Indonesia, they will have trouble. I then started asking them to use Bahasa Indonesia at home but I was not angry if they refused to. They wanted to speak it with me or their father but not with each other. If I heard they speak English, I reminded them to speak Bahasa Indonesia".

Mrs. P said that there is no international school in Kalimantan; consequently, the children will go to the government school which uses Bahasa Indonesia as the language of instruction. Mrs. P then started thinking about maintaining their children's original language.

"The children will go to government school. There is no International school in Kalimantan. They will use Bahasa Indonesia at school. If they still don't understand Bahasa Indonesia they will only get little trouble. Yeah ... they may need to learn how to speak and write".

4.3. The parents' strategy

Mrs. P's efforts were working in the beginning, but later the children only spoke Bahasa Indonesia with each other when they were around their parents. When the children thought their parents could not hear their conversation they used English.

"They spoke Bahasa Indonesia when they are around me. If they were far, they spoke English. They thought I couldn't hear them. Sometimes they just whispered each other when they were around me. I knew they spoke English".

Mrs. P kept speaking Bahasa Indonesia to them and reminded them to do that as well although they became sad and sometimes refused to speak. Realizing this, Mrs. P did not force them to speak Bahasa Indonesia but she still kept speaking it to them. She just encouraged the children to speak Bahasa Indonesia, even if only a few words.

"I reminded them to speak Bahasa Indonesia although only to speak one or two words. For example, I asked one of them to return a book to my neighbor, I gave him a message such as "say 'Buku dari Mama, terima kasih'" (This book is from my mom, thank you).

She believed that although the children could not speak Bahasa Indonesia, they still could understand it if they heard it frequently.

"They talked, laughed each other, but when suddenly I came they stopped talking. They looked sad. I did not ask or force them to use Bahasa Indonesia but I kept using it while speaking with them. I believed that if they could still answer me, it meant they understood".

One morning, the writer came to Mrs. P's house. That time was a school holiday so Mrs. P's children were at home. When the writer spoke to one of Mrs. P's sons (A), he replied in

English. The writer knew that he really understood that the writer wanted to meet his mother even if the writer used Bahasa Indonesia Gaul (the colloquial language).

Q: Apa kabar, A? (How are you, A?)

A: I am good.

Q: Mama nggak pergi kan? (Mom is at home, isn't?)

A: Yeah ... She's at home.

Q: Mama lagi ngapain? (What is your mom doing?)

A: She's just reading, I'll tell her that you're coming.

The writer came again to the family's house on another day. They were preparing to go swimming. Mrs. P asked me to come with them to the swimming pool. B was not ready at that time because he was still looking for something when finally he asked his mom about it. Mrs. P sometimes pretended that she did not understand what her children meant in English, in order to make her children use Bahasa Indonesia.

B: Mom, where is my goggles?

Mrs. P : Apa itu goggle, Mama nggak tau? (What are goggles, I don't know?)

B: My goggles.

Mrs. P: Iya, Mama nggak tau, Bahasa Indonesianya apa? (I don't know, what is it in Bahasa Indonesia?)

B: Kaca mata for berenang. (Glasses for swimming.)

Mrs.P: Nih... pakai Bahasa Indonesianlah, jadinya Mama tau. (Here it is ... You are supposed to use Bahasa Indonesia so I know what you mean.)

B: Yeah ...yeah ... whatever.

4.4. The parents' efforts

Until now, Mrs. P has used 'speaking Bahasa Indonesia' at home as the 'unwritten rule' for the family, although in fact only she and her husband speak it to the children, whereas the children reply it by using English.

"I use Bahasa Indonesia always at home. No English at all to speak with the children. It is difficult and almost impossible to ask them to speak Bahasa Indonesia because they reply my words in English".

Since this family is a religious family, they go to the church every Sunday afternoon. They choose the church that provides the Bahasa Indonesia service for Indonesian people. In the church, they meet other Indonesian families. They speak Bahasa Indonesia there. Unfortunately, the majority of children in that church service use English. A and B speak English with their friends there. Mrs P. says that since the service is in Bahasa Indonesia, at least the children also listen to material which is explained in Bahasa Indonesia.

"I bring them to the Indonesian community church. They sit down listening to someone who is talking in Bahasa Indonesia. In the rest time, they play with all Indonesian kids, they use English. If they speak with their friends, it is not easy to remind them to use Bahasa Indonesia".

When the writer came at night recently, this family was reading the Bible together. The writer saw that the children listened to their parents

talking about the Bible story, which was explained in Bahasa Indonesia. They laughed when their parents told funny stories. Their expressions showed that they understood about what their parents were explaining.

This family also put the children in Indonesian class every Saturday which is located in the Indonesian consulate. Some Australian children who like to learn Bahasa Indonesia and Gamelan (Indonesian musical instruments) come to this class. In this class, they are taught to understand Indonesian culture as well. According to Mrs. P, in the class their teachers always encourage the children to speak Bahasa Indonesia but after the class ends, they speak English again with other children.

That evening, the writer came with Mrs. P, A and B to the Indonesian consulate. While they learnt Bahasa Indonesia, the writer and Mrs. P were waiting in the parking area which was used by children to play during recess. When recess came, the children played in the car park area. The writer saw that no children spoke Bahasa Indonesia at that time. Mrs. P said:

"I put them there so they can learn Bahasa Indonesia, but everybody spoke English. Moreover, some of their friends are Australian, so they speak English outside the classroom".

Although every month this family attends the Indonesian community meeting, the children are still reluctant to use Bahasa Indonesia. It is more difficult to ask them to speak Bahasa Indonesia because almost no

Indonesian children speak Bahasa Indonesia except the children who have just come to Australia. Mrs. P said that usually the new children will remain quiet at first. They start talking to friends when they start acquiring E

"My family sometimes comes to visit friends or some friends come to our house. We talk in Bahasa Indonesia but the children speak English. Last time a new friend just came from Indonesia, he brought his children. The children couldn't speak English yet so, they just kept quiet. When we met those children again, they already spoke with our children in English".

When Mrs. P went back to Indonesia with her family during the school holidays, last December, for about six weeks, she said that the children were easily involved in the family activities because they understand Bahasa Indonesia. At first, A and B just didn't say a single word in Bahasa Indonesia because it was difficult for them to do that. They gradually spoke Bahasa Indonesia although the very simply. Based on her experiences with the children showing they can easily speak Bahasa Indonesia after they had been in Indonesia for a short time, Mrs. P said that she will continue speaking it to help her children understand it.

"Yeah ... at the beginning they kept silent, after that they spoke the simplest sentences such as 'kamu mau main?' (Do you want to play?), 'saya lapar' (I am hungry), 'boleh pinjam sepeda?' (Can I borrow your bike?). I think, if they

still understand Bahasa Indonesia, they can adjust themselves easily when they go back to Indonesia. So I keep speaking Bahasa Indonesia at home".

4.5. The difficulty of maintenance.

One afternoon when the writer came to Mrs. P's house, there were some Indonesian children there. They were the Indonesian children who are in the same class with Mrs. P's children. Those children were playing 'Yo-Gi-Oh' cards which are popular among children. All of them communicated in English. Mrs. P said to me:

"... look, it is so difficult, isn't it. I ask them to use Bahasa Indonesia, but their 'environment' forces them to speak English".

More specifically, Mrs. P said that since the children also need English skills to deal with school work, they depend more on English. Homework, reading tasks, conversation with friends and teachers et cetera require them to be familiar with English.

In addition, Mrs. P said that television programs, school activities, and peers have greater influence than the home situation does on the development of her children's English language skills. Her controls are difficult to apply. Moreover, Mrs. P has her own activities, so she cannot devote all her time to maintain her children primary language.

"... my children like cartoon films, I have no Indonesian films here. Everything on TV is in English ..."

Chapter 5: Discussion

From Mrs. P's explanations, there is evidence of a conflict between wishing her children become expert in English, while at the same time wanting them to be proficient as well in their mother tongue. On one hand, parents believe that mastering English is very important for their children in today's world, especially for their future careers. On the other hand, it is also important to maintain the children's mother tongue because they will go back to their home country. However, the reluctance of children to speak the mother tongue cannot be separated from the dominant influence of the majority language which is used by a community (Bhela, 2003). Moreover, children at their age are not secure yet with their mother tongue so they probably shift to the language which has more influence in their lives (Fillmore, 1991).

It is clear from Mrs. P's comments that first of all she shows a positive attitude toward English. Mrs. P is very happy and proud because her children can acquire fluent English. She thinks that English can give an advantage not only to her children but also to her. She can learn English from her children. But her attitude toward English became less positive when she realized that her children are reluctant to use Bahasa Indonesia. As suggested by Kuncha and Bathula (2004), 'necessity and pride' have been two influencing factors on language shift. Some researchers (Harding and Riley, 1986; Rohani et al., 2005) also remarked that positive attitudes toward

English can speed up the language shift into English.

Before realizing that her children showed increasing reluctance to speak Bahasa Indonesia, Mrs. P's attitudes towards Bahasa Indonesia were less positive. This situation caused less use of Bahasa Indonesia by the family. Harding and Riley (1986) said that "if a language no longer serves the child's communicative needs, he will not use it and if he doesn't use it he will forget it, quickly and completely" (p.41). Since Mrs. P realized that her children could forget Bahasa Indonesia, she then managed to maintain it.

Mrs. P encourages her children to acquire fluent English while at the same time they understand Bahasa Indonesia as well. Mr. P makes any attempts to make the children use Bahasa Indonesia at home. The P family uses Bahasa Indonesia as the 'home language'. More importantly, this family also reminds the children to speak Bahasa Indonesia if they use English at home. The use of Bahasa Indonesia at home is in line with what Rohani et al. (2005) said: that if it is hoped to maintain a language, that language must be integrated into the home environment. This means parents should be able to offer and include children in their everyday interaction (Fillmore, 1991).

There is some evidence in this study, from the interviews with Mrs. P, that show the efforts made by this family to maintain the mother tongue of her children. Mrs P believes that efforts such as speaking Bahasa Indonesia at home, attending some Indonesian

events, and visiting Indonesia can increase the use of Bahasa Indonesia by her children. Although these efforts are not effective enough, since the children only understand Bahasa Indonesia without being able to speak or write it, at least they can frequently hear people speaking Bahasa Indonesia. Although this family cannot bring the children to be completely bilingual, Mrs. P can successfully develop receptive bilingualism for her children (Harding and Riley, 1986). According to Harding and Riley (1986), Mrs. P's children could acquire Bahasa Indonesia easily when they go back to Indonesia because basically they already have a good understanding of it.

According to Mrs. P, there are some serious problems arising from their efforts to maintain her children's original language. Firstly, the position of English as the dominant language in the community and the instruction of language at school make the children feel that without English they will not be able to participate at school and in community activities. It is true that language is a powerful influence upon young children soon after entering English-speaking classrooms (Fillmore, 1991). Secondly, young children cannot be separated from their peers and friends. Children need to know English if they want to be accepted by their friends (Bosemark, 1998). Bosemark (1998) stated that there are no language teachers who are better than other children or one's own peers. Thirdly, it is not easy to find books and television programs that use Bahasa Indonesia. It may be beyond

Mrs. P's imagination to go back to or find books for her children in her home country. In fact, television programs and books cannot be separated from the lifestyle of children. Harding and Riley (1986) stressed that "if the language is 'rare', acquiring even the simplest of materials can be difficult ..." (p.78).

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This study reveals how an Indonesian mother who has been living in Australia for a few years struggles to maintain her children's mother tongue, since she and her family plan to go back to Indonesia soon after her husband finishes study. A dilemma arises when on one hand she wants her children acquire fluent English, which is good for their future careers in Indonesia, whereas on the other hand she also wants her children to acquire Bahasa Indonesia because they will go back to Indonesia.

Parents need to make an effort to maintain their children's language skills. Efforts such as using the mother tongue as the home language may be a good way to foster the children's use of it. Children perhaps cannot speak or write Bahasa Indonesia, but at least they can understand it. So, this can help the children re-learn Bahasa Indonesia because basically they have a good understanding of it.

This study contributes to the general understanding of the problems which may be faced by Indonesian families regarding the maintenance of their children's mother tongue. From one point of view, raising children to be bilingual is not easy. There are many

forces from the dominant language community that make the children forget their mother tongue. Although it is good to maintain the children's mother tongue, in fact it is also not easy. Perhaps parent can do the best by defending against the loss of their children's mother tongue.

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