

The Role of Parents in Sundanese Language Preservation

Dingding Haerudin

Faculty of Language and Literature Education, Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, Jl. Dr. Setiabudhi No. 299, Bandung, Indonesia
dingding.haerudin@upi.edu

Keywords: Parents, Preservation, Sundanese Language.

Abstract: This study aims to describe the efforts of parents in the preservation of the Sundanese language as a native language and a local language. The description of this paper includes the use of Sundanese language in everyday life at home and its surrounding environment; in communication with teachers at school; the importance of instilling manners of speaking (*undak-usuk/unggah-ungguh*) to children; the importance of Sundanese language teaching in schools; the importance of children learning local culture; the types of culture that children learn; the efforts of parents to encourage children to learn the culture; and the opinion that the local language is used as the language of education at the elementary level. The research used descriptive method. The data collection technique in this study was a questionnaire technique. The instrument used to collect data was a list of questions or questionnaires distributed to each respondent. The data analysis technique used in this research was descriptive statistical analysis techniques. This study concludes that the preservation of Sundanese should begin in households, where parents use it in communicating with members of the family. Parents must motivate, encourage, and facilitate children, or other family members, to have an understanding of the importance of Sundanese language as the local language, as well as having Sundanese language skills properly.

1 INTRODUCTION

There are various problems underlying this study. They include the weak language skills of young children, the fact that Sundanese is not introduced in family environment, and the low of public attention to the Sundanese language. Public indifference towards local language marks the start of the decline of the position and the function of Sundanese language among communities. This will decrease the number of speakers (Brock-Utne, 2015), the value strength, and the significance of the local language. Likewise, the Sundanese language, in turn, will be abandoned by the community, especially the younger generation, because they do not understand the language's position and functions.

Kartini (1982) states that the Sundanese language is more widely used in rural areas (outside the city) than in urban areas. On the results of the study, it is also explained that the use of Sundanese language in West Java also influenced by pressures. The definition of pressure in the study refers to speaking

partner, who is the higher-ranking or older (Panicacci and Dewaele, 2017).

To address the problems certainly requires the cooperation of all parties, especially the family environment (parents) and educational institutions. It is important to expose knowledge and understanding of the cultural richness embodied in language and literature, as a valuable treasure and universal source of local wisdom (Cornhill, 2014).

Therefore, this paper presents one of the results of research on "A Need Analysis of Mother Tongue Program Development 2013." The one of the results is efforts of parents to empower Sundanese language in the Districts of Bungbulang, Garut, and Pasir Jambu, Bandung.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

The local language, as stated in the conclusion of National Language Politics 1975, in Alwasilah (1989), has several functions. The functions are to be a symbol of regional pride, a symbol of regional

identity, means of communication in family environment and the local community, benefactor of the national language, the language of instruction in elementary schools in a certain area, development tool, and benefactor of local culture. The similar idea is also stated by Hult and Källkvist (2016) and Von et al. (2012).

2.1 Sundanese as Local Language

In detail, the function and the status of local languages cover the following. Firstly, the survival and development of local languages that continues to be maintained by the speech communities is parts of Indonesian cultural life that are guaranteed by the Constitution of 1945. Secondly, the local languages are cultural treasures that can be used for the sake of not only development and standardization of our national language, but also for the sake of promotion and development of local languages, and therefore they need to be maintained. Thirdly, the local languages are the epitome of socio-cultural values that reflects and ties the culture of the speech community. Fourthly, the local languages are varied, not only in their structure but also in the number of their native speakers. Fifthly, certain local languages are used as calculation tool, either orally or in writing, while other local languages are only used orally. Sixthly, in terms of growth and development, a local language influences and, at the same time, is influenced by the national language, other local languages, and particular foreign languages. The phenomenon occurs because the increase of Indonesian language users, the increase of the smoothness of the relationship between regions, and the increase of population outflow, as well as the number of marriages between ethnic groups.

Sundanese language, like other local languages, is under the protection of the state. The Constitution of 1945, Chapter IV, Explanation of Article 36, states, "In regions that have their-own languages which are well-maintained by their people (i.e., Javanese, Sundanese, Madurese, and so on), the languages will be respected and well-maintained by the state also. The languages are the part of the live Indonesian culture".

Local languages grow and develop in West Java, as contained in Local Regulation number 5 of 2003, Chapter I, Article 1 (7), are Sundanese, Cirebon, and Betawi-Malay. Sundanese is also the second language with largest speakers in Indonesia. The speakers are spread in almost the entire region of West Java, except in Cirebon territories that use

languages of Cirebon, some parts of Bogor, Depok, and Bekasi, which use Betawi-Malay.

2.2 The Empowerment of Sundanese in Family Environment

Language is powerful –having power, useful, and valuable– when it is controlled and used by its speakers in everyday life (Menegatti and Rubini, 2013). The people of a nation, especially the children/youth that controls local language will inherit their cultural norms, i.e. identity. Likewise, the Sundanese language will be beneficial if it is maintained and developed by the speech community. The Sundanese, in fact, is full with cultural norms.

Language is the most prominent distinguishing feature because language makes each social group to feel themselves as a distinct entity from the other groups (Reyes, 2017). A child has potential of language skills since the day she/he is born. Mastering language is highly dependent on the language heard in everyday life. Therefore, family determines a child's first language skills. Sundanese introduced to children from an early age within family becomes the mother tongue of the child.

At 18 months old, the number of words is multiplied and they begin to appear in "sentence" with two or three words. The sentence is commonly called "telegraphic" (telegram style) utterances. At two years old, children understand language that is more sophisticated and they expand their speaking skills spoken, even to form negative statements and questions.

At 3 years old, children can receive a quantity of extraordinary linguistic inputs. Their speech and comprehension abilities increase rapidly when they become manufacturers of nonstop chattering. Their conversation is incessant. Language becomes a blessing and a curse for the people around them! Their creativity only brings smiles of their parents and siblings.

Language fluency and creativity of a child continues until school age. At school age, when studying the social functions of language, children not only learn what they have to say but also what they cannot say. Introduction of Sundanese, in its capacity as local languages, actually is not only important in the family environment, but also in the formal context of school environment.

This is consistent with the results of the Seminar on National Language Politics in 1975. The formulation of the seminar states that the development of the teaching of local languages aimed at improving the quality of teaching of the

local language that its speakers have (1) local language skills, (2) good knowledge of local language, and (3) positive attitude toward local language and its literature. The teaching of local language is the means to (a) support the development of national culture elements; (b) direct the local language development; and (c) standardize the diversity of local languages.“

The teaching of local language (Sundanese) in school has an important function in the social life of Sundanese culture because it is an effective way to preserve, foster, and develop the language, literature, and social culture of Sundanese (Von et al., 2012). Although it already has the legitimacy from the government, the teaching of local language (Sundanese) in West Java still faces various problems. Sudaryat (2001) mentions that the problems are (1) the lack of professional teachers, (2) the lack of interest and attitude of students, (3) the failure of learning process, (4) the content of curriculum and teaching materials, and (5) the teaching environment.

One aspect of the issues raised is the environment in which children learn. Family is an environment that helps to determine the success of learning (Zolkoski and Bullock, 2012). It means that family support also greatly influences the children success in learning language. Therefore, parents have an important role in supporting the success of local language mastery. There are less amount of researches related to parental supervision of Sundanese. Therefore, this research is expected to provide useful information for public.

3 METHODS

3.1 Research Objectives

This study aims to describe the use of Sundanese language in everyday life at home and its surrounding environment; in communication with teachers at school; the importance of instilling manners of speaking (*undak-usuk/unggah-ungguh*) to children; the importance of Sundanese language teaching in schools; the importance of children learning local culture; the types of culture that children learn; the efforts of parents to encourage children to learn the culture; and the opinion that the local language is used as the language of education at the elementary level.

3.2 Research Methods

This research uses descriptive method. The steps cover a) collecting factual information in detail and describing the symptoms that exist; b) identifying the problems that exist; c) making comparisons; and d) determining things to be taken or the implications of that experiences for future planning and decision-making with regard to policies of Sundanese language guidance.

The respondents of the research were parents of students. The data is collected in two districts, precisely in the Bungbulang District in Garut, Pasir Jambu and Ciwidey Districts in Bandung. The data collection technique in this study was a questionnaire technique questionnaire. The instrument used to collect data was a list of questions or questionnaires that would be distributed to each respondent. The data analysis technique used in this research was descriptive statistical analysis techniques. The descriptive statistical analysis is to analyze the data by describing or depicting data that has been collected as it is.

4 RESEARCH RESULTS

Respondents of this study were 138 parents of students, consisting of 55 men, 65 women, and 18 that did not mention their sex. The age of respondents is ranged between 20-25 years (3), 25-30 years (24), 30-35 years (44), 35-40 years (10), 40-45 years (30), 45-50 years (3), 50-55 years (2), 50-60 years (1), over 60 years (1), and did not answer (32). Respondents came from two Regencies: 28 people from Garut (Bungbulang District); and Bandung (56 people from Pasir Jambu and 54 people from Ciwidey).

The instrument used to collect data about the role of parents in maintaining Sundanese is related to (1) the language used by parents in everyday life at home; (2) the language used by parents in daily life at the neighborhood around the house; (3) the language used by parents to communicate with teachers in schools; (4) transformation of language manners (*undak-usuk/unggah-ungguh*) to children; (5) the importance of Sundanese language teaching in schools; (6) the importance of learning local culture; (7) the type of culture that children learn; (8) the efforts of parents to encourage children to learn local culture; and (9) the use of local language as the language of education at elementary level.

The data obtained from 138 respondents are as follows.

4.1 The Language Used by Parents in Everyday Life at Home

There are 112 (81%) respondents that use local languages as a daily language in home. One (0.72%) respondent uses the national language. 12 (8.69%) respondent's use a mixture of languages. 13 (9.42%) respondents did not answer.

4.2 The Language Used by Parents in Everyday Life at the Neighborhood around the House

There are 125 (90.57) respondents that use local language as daily language in the environment around the house and 13 (9.42%) respondents who did not answer.

4.3 The Language Used by Parents to Communicate with Teachers in Schools

There are 95 (68.84%) respondents who use the local language to communicate with teachers in school. Two (1.45%) respondents use the national language. 28 (20.29%) respondent's use a mixture of languages. 13 (9.42%) respondents did not answer.

4.4 Installing manners of speaking (*undak-usuk/unggah-ungguh*) to children

There are 110 (79.71) respondents that teach manners of speaking (*undak-usuk/unggah-ungguh*) to their children. 15 (10.87) respondents do not teach. 13 (9.42%) respondents did not answer.

4.5 The importance of Sundanese language teaching in schools

120 (86.95%) respondents agree that the local language should be taught in school. 18 (13.05%) respondents did not answer. There are various reasons for parents who agree that Sundanese need to be studied in schools. 38 (27.54%) respondents argue that it is because Sundanese is everyday language. 30 (21.74%) respondents argue that it is important for the preservation of the local language. 20 (14.49%) respondents state that it is to assist student to learn subjects quickly. 28 (20.29%) respondents state that it is because there are many children who cannot speak Sundanese well. 19 (13.77%) respondents state that children now feel no

prestige to speak Sundanese. 12 (8.69%) respondents argue that it is important to make their children know manners. 27 (19.56%) respondents did not answer.

4.6 The Importance of Learning Local Culture

There are 138 (100%) respondents who agree that their children should learn local culture.

4.7 The Types of Culture that Children Should Learn

Several respondents emphasized that there are certain types of culture that need to be learned by children. Practicing dance is mentioned by 92 (66.66%) respondents. Batik is proposed by 84 (60.86%) respondents. Practicing local music is agreed by 58 (40.03%) respondents. Practicing drama is mentioned by 54 (39.13%) respondents. Practicing a speech in the local language is proposed by 82 (59.42%) respondents. Reading poetry/singing local songs is agreed by 44 (31.88%) respondents. Learning etiquette/manners is mentioned by 15 (10.86%) respondents. Sundanese traditional games is proposed by 19 (13.77%) respondents.

4.8 The Efforts of Parents to Encourage Their Children to Learn the Local Culture

Parents do many things to make their children learning the local culture. Urging children to learn is proposed by 24 (17.39%) respondents. Urging children to read textbooks is mentioned by 2 (1.49%) respondents. Listening/watching news/information is only supported by 2 (1.49%) respondents. Introducing the local culture since early ages is considered important by 20 (14.49%) respondents. Attending local art performances is accepted by 21 (15.22) respondents. Attending local contests is proposed by 32 (23.19) respondents. Introducing Sundanese children's traditional games is supported by 20 (14.49) respondents. Telling Sundanese stories is considered important by 19 (13.77%) respondents. Taking Sundanese courses is proposed by 17 (12.32%) of respondents. No answer came out from 9 (6.52%) respondents.

4.9 The Local Language should be used as Instructional Language of Education in Elementary School

106 parent's respondents (76.81%) agreed that the local language should be used as instructional language of teaching and learning activities at the elementary level. Disagreement was proposed by only 5 (3.62%) respondents. Lastly, 27 (19.56) respondents did not answer.

The reasons of parents' agreement cover many things. It is believed by 76 (55.07%) respondents that students understand teaching materials/learning more easily. One (0.72%) respondent perceives that children can be a champion/the first rank. Sundanese language clarifies/helps students to understand lessons; it is believed by 5 (3.62%) respondents. Sundanese language course should be in curriculum; this is an idea of 5 (3.62%) respondents. School hours for Sundanese lesson only get little portion; there are 19 (13.77%) respondents that believe the thought. Sundanese language is very important for the preservation of culture; the inspiration is hold by 21 (15.22) of respondents. Sundanese language course should be mixed with Indonesian; the opinion is proposed by 15 (10.87%) respondents. Last, 17 (12.31%) respondents did not answer.

5 DISCUSSION

Respondents of this research still have concern and play an important role in preserving and empowering Sundanese in the region. The data shows 81% of parents using Sundanese language as the communication tool with family members at home. The condition supports efforts to conserve the local language (Sundanese), which is initiated in family. The habitation of using the local language to children at home also means the development of children as members of family to learn to understand their identity as Sundanese. Parents place the local language according to its function. The functions of local languages (such as Sundanese, Javanese, Balinese, Madurese, Makassar, and Batak) are to be (1) a symbol of regional pride, (2) a symbol of regional identity, (3) means of communication in family environment and the local community (Alwasilah, 1985).

Parents do not use Sundanese language only a home but also in the surrounding environment. The data shows 90.57% parents everyday use Sundanese language as a means of communication with

neighbors in their neighborhood. The condition describes the positive language behavior because the use of Sundanese in the neighborhood influences children's behavior and speech act. If members of society around house are accustomed to using Sundanese in daily communication, it will impact their children's attitudes to speak Sundanese language as the local language.

As noted by Coates (2015), the language attitude is marked by three characteristics: 1) language loyalty, 2) language pride, and 3) awareness of the norm. Language loyalty, according to the concept, is the attitude that encourages a society to maintain the independence of the language, or even to prevent the entry of foreign influence. Language pride is an attitude that encourages a person or a group to make a language as a symbol of personal or group identity; and to differentiate themselves from other people or groups. Awareness of the language norms encourages careful, lighters, polite, and decent use of language (Muñoz, 2014). Such awareness is a factor that will determine the speech behavior of in the form of language use. Language fidelity, language pride, and language awareness are positive characteristics of language.

Parents generally always use Sundanese language to communicate with teachers. The data shows 68.84% parents using Sundanese language when to communicate with teachers at school or in other places. Teachers as educators have a conservative role and provide a role model. Teachers show good speaking attitudes, not only to the students, also to the parents of the students. Likewise, the use of Sundanese with teachers in schools has become a habit of most people in the research. The parents try to show his or her identity. It means that parents have implemented one of the functions and position of Sundanese as local languages. As contained in the formulation of National Language Politics, 1975, "the survival and development of local languages that continues to be maintained by the speech communities is parts of Indonesian cultural life that are guaranteed by the Constitution of 1945."

Parents always seek to instill language manners (*undak-usuk/unggah-ungguh*) to children. The data shows 79.71% parents have attempted to instill or teach *undak-usuk/unggah-ungguh* of Sundanese to their children since the early ages. It illustrates that generally the parents understand the importance of speaking manners. The use of speaking manners can create harmony in communication, maintain pragmatic attitude in speaking, instill mutual respect between people, and generate understanding of

manners in civil society (a society that upholds values, norms, laws, which are supported by the mastery of civilized faith, science, and technology). This is in line with the opinion of Yudibrata (1989) in the book *Bagbagan Makena Basa Sunda*, who states that pragmatically Sundanese is used for specific purposes in one situation. Rules of Sundanese use (*undak-usuk*) constitute the basic principles of how to implement the use of language. By learning *undak-usuk* of Sundanese, children understand and use language skillfully in communication. Pragmatic or the rules of language use propose training to be able to speak, to write, to read, and to listen; not teaching theories/knowledge/language systems that are formal and abstract.

Parents consider Sundanese language is important to be taught in schools. The data shows 86.95% parents state the need and the importance of Sundanese language taught in schools. This indicates that parents have a high sense of viewing the Sundanese language as a local language and mother tongue. In addition, they have an intelligent insight. They state that as the everyday language Sundanese need to be studied formally in school so that children have the ability to speak Sundanese well, including knowing manners, capable of speaking subtle language, and do not feel embarrassed to speak Sundanese. This is in line with the objective of Sundanese language learning in school, as expressed in *Sundanese Curriculum* (2013), that students obtain experience and compose Sundanese language; appreciate and be proud of Sundanese language as the local language in West Java, which is also the mother tongue for most people; understand Sundanese in terms of form, meaning and function, and able to use it appropriately and creatively in various contexts (goals, purposes, and conditions); able to use Sundanese to improve intellectual ability, emotional maturity, and social maturity; have the ability and discipline in Sundanese language (speaking, writing, and thinking); able to enjoy and take advantage of literary works to improve the knowledge and ability of Sundanese language, personal development, and to expand the horizons of life; appreciate and be proud of Sundanese literature as a treasure of culture and the people of Sunda.

Parents state that children should learn local culture. The data shows 100% parents agree that their children should learn important local culture. The reasons are, among others, children must have an identity (*kasundaan*), understand the environment in which they live -the Land of Sunda; the next generation of Sundanese culture in the future.

As for matters related to the types of culture that children should learn, parents suggest different types. They are, among others, 1) practicing dance, batik, 2) playing local music, 3) playing drama, 4) practicing speech in the local language, 5) reading poetry/sing local songs, 6) learning etiquette/manners, and 7) traditional Sundanese games (*kaulinan urang Sunda*).

Parents do some efforts so that their children want to learn the Sundanese culture, such as persuading children to read Sundanese textbooks; facilitating children to listen to/watch news/information about Sundanese culture; introducing regional culture since early ages; registering their children to participate in art events, in contests, in games; fostering their children to listen to the stories in Sundanese language; and registering their children to courses of arts.

Parents agree that the local language should be used as the language of education at the elementary level. The data shows 76.81% parents support the Sundanese language as the language of instruction in schools. The reasons of parents' agreement cover many things. Some believe that students understand teaching materials/learning more easily. However, some parents claim that the Sundanese language should only be used as a medium to clarify/to help children to understand subjects, in addition as a medium of cultural preservation. That is, the Sundanese language is not used as a language of education, but the Sundanese language is used when the child does not understand materials. Local languages can be used in early grades of elementary school. As noted in conclusion of National Language Politics of 1975 in Alwasilah (1985) that local languages can be used as media of instruction in elementary schools, especially the early grades. In addition, local language has several functions. The functions are to be a symbol of regional pride, a symbol of regional identity, means of communication in family environment and the local community, benefactor of the national language, the language of instruction in elementary schools in a certain area, development tool, and benefactor of local culture.

6 CONCLUSIONS

The parents in the study area use Sundanese language in everyday life at home, in the neighborhood around the house, or when communicating with teachers in schools. The parents seek to provide examples of usage of speaking

manners (*undak-usuk/unggah-ungguh*) in everyday life to their children. They agree that Sundanese language and culture are important to be taught in schools. They expect their children to learn the kinds of culture, such as practicing traditional dances, batik, folk music, drama, speech in the local language, read poetry/sing local songs, learning etiquette/manners, and traditional games. Parents do some efforts so that their children want to learn the Sundanese culture, such as persuading children to read Sundanese textbooks; facilitating children to listen to/watch news/information about Sundanese culture; introducing regional culture since early ages; registering their children to participate in art events, in contests, in games; fostering their children to listen to the stories in Sundanese language; and registering their children to courses of arts.

This study reveals only about the language preservation efforts of parents. There should be a research to measure the positive impacts of the efforts of parents on children's Sundanese language skills. Therefore, it is important to conduct further research on children's Sundanese language skills, especially the ability to use the *undak-usuk* of the language.

REFERENCES

- Alwasilah, A. C., 1985. *Sosiologi Bahasa*. Bandung: Angkasa.
- Brock-Utne, B., 2015. Language-in-education policies and practices in Africa with a special focus on Tanzania and South Africa. In *Second International Handbook on Globalisation, Education and Policy Research*, pp. 615-631.
- Coates, J., 2015. *Women, men and language: A sociolinguistic account of gender differences in language*. Routledge.
- Cornhill, D., 2014. *Tribal knowledge in early childhood education: A Ngāti Te Ata Waiohua case study* (Doctoral dissertation). Auckland, New Zealand: Auckland University of Technology.
- Dinas Pendidikan Provinsi Jawa Barat, 2013. *Kompetensi Inti dan Kompetensi Dasar Mata Pelajaran Bahasa dan Sastra Sunda SD/MI, SMP/MTs, SMA/SMK/MA/MAK*. Bandung: BPBDK Prov. Jabar.
- Hult, F. M., Källkvist, M., 2016. Global flows in local language planning: Articulating parallel language use in Swedish university policies. *Language Planning*, 17(1), pp. 56-71.
- Kartini, T., 1982. *Kedudukan dan Fungsi Bahasa Sunda di Jawa Barat*. Jakarta: Pusat Pembinaan dan Pengembangan Bahasa.
- Menegatti, M., Rubini, M., 2013. Convincing similar and dissimilar others: The power of language abstraction in political communication. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, 39(5), pp. 596-607.
- Muñoz, C., 2014. Exploring young learners' foreign language learning awareness. *Language Awareness*, 23(1-2), pp. 24-40.
- Panicacci, A., Dewaele, J. M., 2017. Do interlocutors or conversation topics affect migrants' sense of feeling different when switching languages?. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, pp. 1-16.
- Pemerintah Provinsi Jawa Barat, 2003. *Paket Perda Kebudayaan Provinsi Jawa Barat dilengkapi dengan Petunjuk Pelaksanaan, Nomor 5, 6, dan 7*. Bandung: Disbudpar Jabar.
- Reyes, A., 2017. *Language, identity, and stereotype among Southeast Asian American youth: The other Asian*. Routledge.
- Sudaryat, Y., 2001. *Makalah Konferensi Internasional Budaya Sunda (KIBS) I*. Bandung: Panitia KIBS.
- Undang-Undang Dasar 1945 Negara Republik Indonesia
- Von, G., Kochenderfer-Ladd, B., Perren, S., Alsaker, F. D., 2012. Links between local language competence and peer relations among Swiss and immigrant children: The mediating role of social behavior. *Journal of school psychology*, 50(2), pp. 195-213.
- Yudibrata, K., 1989. *Bagbagan Makéna Basa Sunda*. Bandung: Rahmat Cijulang.
- Zolkoski, S. M., Bullock, L. M., 2012. Resilience in children and youth: A review. *Children and youth services review*, 34(12), pp. 2295-2303.