Multiculturalism, Javanese Language, and Social Identity: A Conceptual Discussion from the Sociological Perspective

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Abstract. In this study, I investigate the relationship between Javanese language and social identity in the multicultural era. Both conceptions are investigated via the lens of habitus, a concept introduced by Pierre Bourdieu to better understand the origins of human behavior. Indonesian speaks at least their native tongue and Bahasa Indonesia, the country's official language, due to the country's thousands of islands and dialects. One of the most widely spoken mother tongues in Java is the Javanese language. People in the east and central parts of Java Island utilize it in their daily communications. Thus, it is safe to infer that Javanese people keep their legacy language while keeping their culture. However, due to its complexity, learning the language is challenging because the language's complexity must be considered. The study begins with a discussion of bilingualism in a global context. Many people are bilingual nowadays. Some requirements necessitate being multilingual. Then the discussion goes on how language, especially Javanese, may influence social identity. Identity and language are linked when one becomes a part of a new group and communicates in a new language. After that, the discussion is on the history about the beginning of the modification of the Javanese language, that can be linked to social identity from the lens of habitus. I conclude that habitus might help us understand the concept of interlocutors' identity in the Javanese language.

Keywords: Habitus, Hierarchical Status, Identity, Javanese Language, Social Interaction

1   Introduction

People have moved from one place to another place, from one country to another country. Multiculturalism is everywhere. One of the triggers of multiculturalism is people's migration that has occurred since a long time ago; in the USA, for example, various immigrants have been there for generations. In relation to the context of language, their mother tongues could have decreased in line with time. Therefore, it may be assumed that multiculturalism may cause language loss [1]. However, language loss can be prevented [1]. Further argues that in Canada, for instance, mother tongue languages are still being maintained especially by the involvement of co-ethnic communities. Thus, at least, the communities continue to be bilingual. Bilingualism might occur everywhere in this multicultural era, not only within the terms of migration but also within the situation of people's physical and virtual mobility. Many people would seldom speak only their own language anymore. They speak at least two languages, that is, their own mother tongue or national language and   the target language. While research explores more on

bilingualism in the context of migration [1][2], this paper discusses bilingualism from the context of how the ethnic groups in the central and east parts of Java Island in Indonesia use Javanese language in their daily life for generations [3]. Due to the reason of those in power, Javanese forefathers converted their daily-use language of communication into a hierarchical vocabulary level approximately [4][5], and their descendants have preserved this modified language since then.

In addition, the purpose of this paper is to explore three concepts of identity, Javanese language, and habitus; and to make sense of the connection of these three constructs. First of all, it explores identity and its relationship with language within multiculturalism. Second, it elaborates the complexity of the hierarchical Javanese language relating to its culture and its body gesture when people communicate. Third, it defines habitus as "the product of history" [6] and how it can be connected to identities and Javanese language from the sociological perspective. Finally, it is clear that a connection can be drawn between social identity and Javanese language, and how the concept of habitus, together with other related terms, works in the background which might be said as supporting Javanese people in maintaining and practicing their ancestral hierarchical language. In this paper, I discuss only Javanese as one of the hierarchical languages. Further research could be applied to additional languages with other conceptual approaches.

1.1 Identity, Language, and Multiculturalism

People become involved in bilingualism as a result of multiculturalism. Bilingualism may be link to language proficiency which is an important aspect when people learn about other cultures and be easily adapted to the new environment [7]. Identity is closely related to language proficiency and one's adaptation to getting involved in the socio-cultural environment of a community [3], because "language is an integral part of social life, [and] social interaction" [8].

As a result, the social identity one gets from another culture is an acknowledgment that the person is accepted in the culture and becomes a member of the community. In this case, the ability to speak Javanese from a person who is not a native speaker of Javanese can be considered as an attempt to recognize and blend in with the culture [7]. In Indonesia, bilingualism is everywhere, with so many mother tongues spreading through big and small islands, and their existence has been maintained for ages [3]. Likewise, people still maintain Javanese language with its complexity for social interaction within the community. Although multiculturalism has been there in the island of Java, many people still keep communicating in Javanese language. The maintenance of language use is inseparable from its history as it is examined from the sociological perspective, that is habitus. This will be illustrated in the following two sections.

1.2 The Complexity of the Hierarchical Javanese Language

The Javanese are Indonesia's largest ethnic group, accounting for over 40% of the country's total population. The majority of Javanese live in the center and eastern sections of the island. The Javanese language is spoken by 70% of the population on the island of Java, ensuring its long-term viability [7]. Hierarchical vocabulary use of Javanese language was created during the establishment of the Mataram Kingdom around [4][5], as the modification of the available Javanese language, due to the consideration that the king was chosen from common people.

Since then, Javanese people have maintained this language hierarchy together with the appropriate body gestures for their social interaction. Choices of vocabulary use depend on the

social positions of the interlocutors. For example, between people from different social status, seniority and juniority, different levels of occupation, and different sexes [5]. It is also used to show respect when people interact with others who are assumed as to have a higher level of knowledge even though the others are younger than they are. In this case they use forms of vocabularies which have the same meaning but different ones to address different people. There is a high and low level of vocabulary [9].

It might be assumed that Javanese people are concerned about their social identity which is attributed to them within the community, or they might keep practicing the high and low vocabulary because that is the reality of life, and there is a social division in the community. It can also be argued that they have been familiar with this practice for ages and everybody accepts that practice. Habitus has a role here, that is, what had been practiced by Javanese people in ancient time has been continued by their successors. This demonstrates that what the early inhabitants of Mataram Kingdom chose and practiced centuries ago has now become a tradition that has a major influence on Javanese people's language and cultural activities. For example, 400 years after the formation of Javanese hierarchical language, a noble family living during the Dutch occupation could not address their elder siblings with jij or je ('you' in Dutch - Author), and they had to speak with high vocabulary level of Javanese language to the elders. They also made a point of bringing their hands together and bringing them close to their nose before and after each and every statement they made to their elders [10]. This demonstrates that, in addition to paying attention to the lexical level of language use, Javanese people had to use suitable body movements depending on who they spoke to. Fig. 1 illustrate this tradition.

Although the use of body gestures has decreased in recent years, the remains can still be seen, such as when younger people pass in front of others, they drop their upper body to show that they respect those people. Since they were small and still live with their families, children have been trained this manner. Because they have been reminded of this body motion so many times, they've practiced it and now execute it instinctively whenever they go past others, especially the elderly. Fig. 2 shows how this gesture were practiced a long time ago, and Figure 3 shows it is still being practiced nowadays. Even children have been taught to speak to their parents with varying levels of vocabulary. When speaking to their fathers, they employ high-level vocabulary, but lower-level vocabulary when speaking to their mothers [11]. All of these could be explained from the concept of habitus in the following section.

1.3 Habitus and its related concepts

Before Bourdieu established habitus in the sociological framework to analyze human behavior, it was employed by several early philosophers, for example, Aristotle [12] dealing with habitus in terms of moral construction. Habitus, according to Bourdieu, is "systems of persistent, transposable dispositions, structured structures predisposed to serve as structuring structures, that is, as principles of the creation and structuring of practices" [13]. Some more accompanying concepts must also be provided to understand how habitus works. They are field, capital, and practice, which might be translated as: practices that individuals do in a field (or a community) rely on the capitals they own, and that habitus operates in the background.

In this study, the field is the Mataram Kingdom, the Javanese community, and the family. Family is the micro-unit of a field. Dispositions that form habitus originally come from this micro field. Therefore, habitus has been embodied in the family since generations ago, which influences their thought and conduct. it can be said that family practices exist because they are based on family traditions. Further, Bourdieu [14] argues that people living in geographical proximity would share similar dispositions, similar habitus. As a result, it can be claimed that

Javanese people have the same or similar habitus that influences the way they think and act, as well as the way they communicate in their daily lives. The Mataram Kingdom, as a macro field, and the term capital are discussed in the findings.

2 Research Method

This study provides a conceptual discussion within the constructivism of qualitative study. The conceptual framework is used to predict the relationship between several constructs, to identify less explored relationships among the constructs under discussion [15][16], and to explain how the research question will be investigated [17]. I conducted a literature study to answer the research question: What new insight can be obtained from connecting the concept of identity, Javanese language, and habitus? In this case, I will elaborate on three concepts: identity, Javanese language, and habitus with its significant related terms, that could be linked to bringing new insight. As a result, in order to respond to the question, I have looked over each construct separately before concluding in the following findings and discussions section.

3 Finding and Discussion

Based on the elaboration of the above three constructs it can be assumed that identity is closely related to language use in the context of getting involved in other cultures. It is an acknowledgement that one is accepted in the culture and therefore one receives an identity as the member of the community [18]. Further argues that in a field, in this case it is the Javanese culture or community, there are people who are in power. To get into this field, newcomers must show that they have built up enough cultural capital, which can take years [19]. In the framework of this study, linguistic proficiency is required to have one's identity recognized by people in power, and hence by the entire culture. As a result, it is reasonable to suppose that language and identity are inextricably linked, and that people must be familiar with and knowledgeable in the target culture in order to communicate effectively in that language [20]. When it comes to expressing verbal expressions, gestures and their movements are quite significant. The speaker's attitude toward the implicit meaning of the communication goal is revealed through gestures [21]. Further, one of the studies in ethnography shows that bodily expressions are culturally shaped and socially acquired [22].

It might be assumed that Javanese people seem to keep using their hierarchical language and keep practicing the high and low level of vocabulary in their daily life followed by body gestures when social interaction occurs. Habitus has a role here that the language practices conducted by Javanese people in ancient times have been kept to be practiced by their descendants. This is where the notion of habitus, as a structured structure and structuring structure, works. In this case, the Javanese language can serve as part of dispositions that have been embodied in Javanese people for ages, and that people do the practice spontaneously because they have been familiar with the practice, even though for outsiders they might have different thoughts about the practice. These dispositions have the function as a structure and at the same time it is structuring. Dispositions generate practices, in this case the practices of using the Javanese language and its hierarchical vocabulary. The Mataram Kingdom could be regarded as a meso field in which there were people as the dominants and those as the dominated.

The dominants had the power as decision-makers. Therefore, in this field of Mataram Kingdom, the dominants created the hierarchical Javanese language that had to be practiced by all people in that era. By creating this hierarchical language and ordered their people to practice it, they also ensured their identity as people in power. Javanese people continue to use their language because they appear to retain their identity as Javanese and caretakers of their culture [23]. The usage of hierarchical language is considered as the rule of communication and thus it embodied as the cultural capital of Javanese people. When it comes to social mobility in society, however, a person from a lower position might be considered a person in a high position if they improve their social status and/or acquire institutionalized cultural capital. This would be acceptable in society.

4   Conclusion

In this paper, I have employed the concepts of identity, Javanese language complexity, and habitus to interrelate them in a conceptual discussion. It has been concluded that the usage of hierarchical Javanese language was derived from the modification of the language since the beginning of Mataram kingdom to accommodate people in power. The complexity of language use that Javanese people maintain could be considered as the existence of their cultural identity as well as their cultural capital. Gestures and language use in this study represent the embodied cultural capital of Javanese people. Its language complexity is also maintained because Javanese have been living in such an environment that supports its hierarchical system of the language as a means of social interaction.

Some practices of the complexity of the Javanese language have also been discussed in this paper. The response to the research question has already been provided by discussing the relatedness among the three concepts. Certainly, habitus can be used to link identity and language. One technique to investigate language and identity is to use the concept of habitus. As a result, different theories might be used to further investigate the problem of language and identity, which could also apply to other languages. The study of the distinctiveness of the Javanese language could be pursued further, assuming that there is currently a dearth of research on the subject.

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