

Javanese Children's Language: initial phenomena of language shift

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After Indonesia proclaimed its independence from Dutch in 1945, Indonesian language was officially declared as the national language. It has been sixty five years now that Indonesian has enjoyed its status with greater language vitality support. On the other hand, Javanese as an indigenous language suffers from unbalanced treatment. This paper reveals what Javanese children's first language, proficiency, and home language. It also describes the relation between locations and children's language. To this, seventy Javanese children of primary school from three different locations (a city, a town, and a village) were recruited, observed and given questionnaires. It is found that there are Javanese city-families reported to have nominated Indonesian as first and home language for their children. On the other hand, Javanese village-children keep loyalty to use their ethnic language. The attrition of Javanese across generation has been detected which children's proficiency is at one level lower than their parents. Location plays role significantly to the children's language. Village-children contribute to their ethnic language maintenance whereas city-children are in support of language shift to Indonesian. Javanese city-parents may not have strong commitment to pass their ethnic language to their children. In the long run, it is not impossible that no native speakers of Javanese may exist in city even though they are themselves Javanese.

Key words: first language, home language, ethnic language, language proficiency, language attrition