DIALECT VARIATION AS AN ACCOMMODATION STRATEGY IN CULTURAL INTERACTION

(A Descriptive Study of Ethnic Javanese – Sundanese in Jatinangor)

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ABSTRACT

Jatinangor, West Java has many transmigrants especially from other parts of Java Island such as Central and East Java. Although living in the same island, Javanese people are different in terms of language and dialect from the native people of Jatinangor, Sundanese. The latter tends to be obstacles when Javanese transmigrants want to make a contact with Sundanese people. In order to make an effective communication, both parties need to perform an accommodation strategy so that they can reach their goals in communication. The present study aims to analyze the accommodation strategies performed by Javanese transmigrants and Sundanese natives in Jatinangor. The present study uses a descriptive qualitative approach by interviewing three respondents. The results of present study suggest a convergence strategy to accommodate the communication between Javanese and Sundanese people in Jatinangor. In this regard, both parties change their dialect so that they can be understood better.

Keywords: Accommodation Theory, Convergence Strategy, Intercultural Communication.
1. Introduction

Java Island, especially West Java Province, has attracted a large number of transmigrators from different parts of Indonesia. One of areas in Java which have a high number of transmigrators is Jatinangor. Located near the Bandung–Sumedang border in West Java, Jatinangor is a popular area for both students and factory workers from neighboring provinces such as Banten, East Java and Central Java. Each year, approximately 25,000 people move to Jatinangor. Most transmigrators are students who choose to study in colleges around Jatinangor (Jabarnews, 2018). Students come to study at various universities such as Padjadjaran University (UNPAD), Institute of Domestic Administration (IPDN), Indonesian Cooperative Management Institute (IKOPIN), and others. Besides students, there are also many workers who live in Jatinangor because it is close to factories operating around the Jatinangor area such as PT. Kahatex, Polyfin Sophisticated, Coca-Cola Amatil Sumedang, PT. Sari Nabati Broth or else.

In their daily lives, these transmigrators might interact closely with the natives of Jatinangor. This interaction occurs in various levels of life, requiring a good communication between transmigrators and local residents. However, communication barriers caused by language differences are unavoidable. It is because the majority of transmigrators come from other provinces in Java Island, Banten, East dan Central Java (Nurrohman, 2016). As people in Banten also use Sundanese, they may not have problems when it comes to communicate with local residents of Jatinangor. However, communication problems may occur between natives and transmigrators from East and Central Java who use Javanese language as their mother tongue. As transmigrators who live or study in Jatinangor with a Javanese cultural background, it is natural that at first the newcomers feel foreign to be in Jatinangor with its Sundanese cultural
background. Their presence is also very easy to recognize, especially from the accent and speech intonation which is different from the local residents with Sundanese backgrounds in Jatinangor. Javanese and Sundanese cultures have different characteristics, values, and norms. Due to the differences, a communication challenge for both parties concerned in intercultural communication, where language differences can lead to ineffective communication in the sense that the message is not conveyed properly. (Ananda, Lingga Detia, Sarwoprasodjo, 2017). Thus, in order to accommodate the communication, both parties may take an accommodation strategy.

Related to the point made in the latter paragraph, several studies have analyzed the accommodation strategy used by the participants to conduct an effective communication. A study of Suputra et al (2020) analyzes the accommodation strategies used by a group of college students. Besides that, Liu et al’s (2022) study examine how brands use accommodation strategies to understand their customers better. In addition, Malik & Rahardjo (2019) have analyzed an intercultural interaction between Javanese and Sundanese people in Pasir Leutik, a district in West Java. However, there is a lack of studies which specifically analyze the accommodation strategies taken by Javanese transmigrators and Sundanese natives. Therefore, the present study aims to analyze the accommodation strategies used by Javanese transmigrators and Sundanese natives in Jatinangor.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Intercultural Communication

Intercultural communication is communication that occurs when someone from a certain culture gives a message to someone from another culture. In fact, this intercultural communication connects interactions between people who have different cultural views and symbol systems when interacting (Sobarudin, 2019). This interaction can occur through verbal and non-verbal communication.
Verbal communication is communication that uses words, both written and spoken or spoken language. Through words, they express their feelings, emotions, thoughts, ideas, or intentions, convey facts, data, and information and explain them, exchange feelings and thoughts, argue with each other, and fight. When parties who communicate verbally are involved, the most important medium is language (Kusumawati, 2016). A language will develop not far from speakers who use the language itself, speakers of languages in an area who have cultural backgrounds and social status (Rahmawati, 2014). It is why people use different languages as their mediums to communicate. In addition to language differences, another difference that looks very contrasting is dialect. Dialects, meanings and expressions when speaking to each ethnic group are also different. Therefore, it is necessary to adapt and communicate well when there is intercultural communication in an area. Communication can be considered effective if there is a similarity of meaning between the communicator and the communicant. (Nurdiana et al., 2020). Thus, intercultural communication may occur between participants with differences in language and dialects. The above points suggest the idea of intercultural communication.

2.2 Communication Accommodation Theory

To minimize the misunderstanding in communication, it seems necessary to make behavioral adjustments or what is known as communication accommodation. A newcomer, who does not understand the culture of the residents where he/she migrates and has not been able to adjust their communication style and attitude, might make mistakes in communication, causing misunderstandings and ineffective communication. (Sari & Rahardjo, 2019). It is where the newcomer needs to accommodate their communication.
approach. The latter idea becomes the main point of communication accommodation theory. In this regard, when someone communicates, he will try to accommodate or adjust their speech style with other people. Soekanto (2002) states that an accommodation is used to refer to a situation which means the existence of a balance (equilibrium) in the interaction between individuals or human groups in relation to social norms prevailing in society. Funay & Konradus (2019) regard communication accommodation theory studies as the relationship to interpersonal adjustment in communication interactions. The core discussion of this theory is adaptation. Accommodation theory also considers the underlying motivations and consequences of what happens when two speakers change their communication style. Giles (2016) argues that a person's style of speech (accent, tone, pace, interruption pattern) can affect the impression others have of the individual. He mentions that the nature, topic of conversation, and the type of person with whom one communicates determine the manner of speech adopted in a given situation.

Furthermore, Aprilia & Yasir (2018) remark that there are three ways to adapt according to the communication accommodation theory: convergence, divergence, and excessive accommodation. Convergence is a strategy in which a person makes communicative interpersonal adaptations with others. This can occur when both parties share similar beliefs, have similar personalities or behave in a similar manner that causes people to be attracted to each other and tends to encourage convergence. Meanwhile, divergence which is a process of dissociation is the strategy of communicators who do not try to show similarities between immigrant communicators and local residents who are communicants. Not because they do not agree or do not respond, but rather the intention to maintain the
culture of their origin. (Nurdiana et al., 2020). Meanwhile, excessive accommodation is a label given for instance, to migrants who are considered by local residents to be too excessive. This term is given to immigrants who, although acting in good faith, are actually considered demeaning. Excessive accommodation usually causes listeners to prepare themselves unequally (Funay & Konradus, 2019).

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Approach

The present study applies a qualitative approach to analyze accommodation strategies used in cultural interaction. Qualitative approach is used because it prioritizes research results in the form of classification and assuming that social reality is seen as subjective. The present study also uses a constructivist paradigm. The constructivist paradigm assumes that humans are constantly engaged with their world and seek to understand it from their own historical and social perspectives – we are born into a world of meaning (words of meaning) bestowed by the culture around us. Therefore, researchers must be able to understand the context or background of the informant concerned. Through visits and in-depth interviews with informants, researchers will be able to interpret what they are looking for; an interpretation shaped by their own experiences and backgrounds. This paradigm has the view that the social reality observed by a person cannot be generalized to everyone as applied by the positivist paradigm. This constructivism paradigm study places the position of the researcher on an equal footing with the informant and as much as possible is directly involved in the life of the subject, and tries to understand and construct something that becomes the understanding of the subject to be studied (Tamburian, 2018).

3.2 Respondents

The present study involves three respondents. The respondents are transmigrants from East and Central
Java who live in Jatinangor and most of them work as factory workers. The respondents are selected based on following criteria: (1) People with Javanese cultural background; (2) People living around Jatinangor; (3) People with thick Javanese dialect. Following is the details about the respondents:

Table 1. Respondents’ Details

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Origin</th>
<th>Profession</th>
<th>Duration Living in Jatinangor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Ratna</td>
<td>53 yrs old</td>
<td>Solo, Central Java</td>
<td>Employee</td>
<td>33 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Lusianta</td>
<td>31 yrs old</td>
<td>Brebes, East Java</td>
<td>Employee</td>
<td>8 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Roni Abdurrahman</td>
<td>39 yrs old</td>
<td>Tegal, Central Java</td>
<td>Employee</td>
<td>21 years</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.3 Data Collection Techniques

The present study uses two data collection techniques; interviews and observations. The interviews are conducted in Bahasa Indonesia and translated to English. Interviews’ results were transcribed and coded. In addition, researchers will collect data through observing the behavior and activities of individuals at the research site. In this regard, the researcher will record/take good notes and conduct direct analysis in the field while looking for information related to the problems being studied. This observation was carried out in order to obtain information about the interaction between Javanese and Sundanese cultures in Jatinangor. Furthermore, observation will complement the results of the interviews.

3.4 Data Analysis

The present study uses three steps for analyzing data: 1) Data reduction as an effort for choosing, focusing on simplifying, abstracting and transforming data from written records, 2) Data presentation in which the activity of compiling a collection of information is carried out, so that conclusions can be drawn and action is taken. Qualitative data are presented through a narrative text, a matrix
display, graphs, networks or charts, 3) Drawing conclusions or verification are carried out by researchers from the beginning to the end of the research process in the field.

3.5 **Data Authentication Test**

Obtained data are tested for its authenticity through a data triangulation technique. The data triangulation technique is carried out by comparing the results of interviews with secondary sources. Furthermore, the interview results will be compared with the information obtained from the observations. The data will be declared valid if they have consistency between one another (Pratiwi, 2017).

4. **Results and Discussions**

At this stage the researchers will examine the process of communication accommodation between Javanese and Sundanese people in Jatinangor. Accommodation is an adaptation of how a person adapts their communication with others. In this regard, Javanese transmigrators periodically adjust their speech speed, accent and also their language for Sundanese natives in Jatinangor. Following are some accommodation strategies they use

**Using Sundanese Suffixes**

In this regard, the respondents say that they started to use affixes in Sundanese (mah, teh, son, or else) in communication. Following is a comment from Informant 1, “[I] understand Sundanese since [I lived] in my sibling’s house. I started to listen and practiced it.” Informant 1 used Bahasa Indonesia with affixes in Sundanese such as ‘mah’ and ‘teh’ despite having a thick Javanese accent. In addition, Informant 2 uses ‘heeuh’ as a way to say yes. This is similar to the way a Sundanese usually speaks. Informant 3 even uses ‘mun’, another suffix in Sundanese when answering questions.

**Using of words or sentences in Sundanese as a convergence in the accommodation process**

Although these informants have lived in Jatinangor for years, they admit not able to speak Sundanese fluently. According to the first
respondent, she rarely uses Sundanese when communicating with the natives while the second informant said she only knew a few words in Sundanese. As Sundanese is divided into three speech levels based on politeness (Rahmawati, 2017), the second respondent only knows the lowest type of Sundanese. On the other hand, the third respondent comments that it is still a bit difficult for him to speak Sundanese, but because the work environment where the majority spoke Sundanese, he inevitably adapted to the situation. Dialect change as an example of convergence in the accommodation process

**Changing dialect to adapt the local culture**

According to the first informant, compared to when she lived in her hometown, Solo, she thinks her dialect changes after she lived for awhile in Jatinangor. The first informant states that she even uses Sundanese dialect when she speaks her native language (Javanese). Meanwhile, according to the second informant, the dialect change is still culturally innate, but in every interaction there are several affixes that Sundanese usually use, such as *mah*, *atu*, and *teh*. Furthermore, the third informant argues that Javanese people have different characteristics. Javanese people who come from Jogja, Solo or East Java might not to be able to follow the Sundanese dialect. However, if the Javanese are from Tegal, Pemalang, it seems easier for them to adjust and be fluent in Sundanese.

The above points suggest the convergence strategy adopted by the respondents in order to adapt to Sundanese natives in Jatinangor. In this regard, the communicant (the respondents) mimics the attitudes of communicator (Sundanese natives) in order to make the communicant more likable toward communicator. Similar point is also made by Miller-Day & Jackson (2012).

**5. Conclusion**

In Jatinangor, the transmigrators from East and Central Java who use
Javanese language as their mother tongue use accommodation strategies in order to communicate with Sundanese natives. The present study aimed to investigate the accommodation strategies used by three respondents. They are transmigrants from East and Central Java provinces who resort to accommodation strategies to communicate with Sundanese people in Jatinangor. The present study used a qualitative approach by conducting interviews and observation toward the respondents. The results suggest the use of Sundanese suffixes, using words or sentences in Sundanese, and changing dialects as the strategies taken by the respondents to adapt with local residents of Jatinangor.

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