Parental discourse strategies in Indonesian multilingual families

Nia Pujiawati[1], Yasir Riady[2]

[1]Universitas Singaperbangsa Karawang, Jawa Barat, Indonesia; [2]Universitas Terbuka, Jakarta, Indonesia

ABSTRACT

Background: In Indonesia, the amount of family speaking more than one language recently increase in intensity. They not only speak their official language and mother tongue for daily communication, but do they also be fluent in another foreign language for example English.

Purpose: The present study closely examines spontaneous interactions between parents and children and explore the family members' efforts to shape children's foreign language use and learning outcomes. The focus is on the parental discourse strategies which presents a sequential analysis of the child's language mixing in interaction which each parent and how the parent reacts to that mixing.

Design and methods: To obtain the data, open-ended questionnaires were sent out to five families in which the children actively use English in their daily conversation. Using Lanza's (1997) parental discourse strategies.

Results: the result reveals that parents mostly follow code-switching in negotiating and enforcing their children to maintain their communication in English.

Keywords: parental discourse; multilingual; communication; Indonesia

Introduction

As people become more mobile and result in interlinguistic and cultural relationships, more and more children grow up in early contact with more than one language in their families. For example, in the UK, school children are known to speak more than 300 different languages. It is important for multilingual children to learn English in order to integrate into the community, but it is also important to understand that growing up to speak multiple languages is a great opportunity for them.

Like the other countries in the world, Indonesian also experience the same phenomenon. For countless families, multilingualism is simply a way of life, a tradition that they want to bestow on their children. They encourage their children to speak in many languages. Not only in their official language and mother tongue, have they also raised their children in English. Parents have many reasons for raising their children with multiple languages. Some hope for better career opportunities for their offspring, while others focus on the reported cognitive and intellectual benefits of learning an additional tongue, including better attention skills, improved memory, and a quicker decision-making process.

But no matter what the motivation behind the parents' desire for giving their children a multilingual upbringing, the problems and worries are the same. The family are encountered the challenges and difficulties that inevitably come with raising a family that differs from 'the norm'. One of the examples is the children often refuse to answer the parents in their target language.

To address this, a parental discourse strategy for children's language mixing (Lanza 1997: 262) is needed. These discourse strategies are used when parents respond to the use of the language their child is learning, especially when the child is using a language that is not the parent's favorite language (or the language that encourages the child to use it). Works for or if the child mixes the two languages when communicating with the parent. According to Lanza (1997)'s Parental Discourse Hypothesis (PDH), the use of these types of discourse strategies by parents is important in determining the success of maintaining a child's minority language.

Bilingual or Multilingual Context

Bilingualism and multilingualism have been interesting issues in linguistic studies. However, there has been some confusion concerning the terms. Many people use `bilingual` and `multilingual` interchangeably. Traditionally, the first term referred to the knowledge of two languages, while the other meant that someone spoke three or more. Annick De Houwer (1999), a professor of language acquisition and multilingualism at the University of Erfurt in Germany, uses the term `bilingual` to describe a person who knows two or more languages, while Goh and Silver (2004) stated that multilingualism is a situation in society in which more than one language is existed. Therefore, to avoid misunderstanding, this study understands that bilingualism means the ability to use two languages, and multilingualism is multilingualism or multilingualism by a single speaker or a community of speakers. Defined as the use of principle.

Bilingualism and multilingualism are interesting topics in linguistics. However, there was confusion when it came to terms. Many people use the terms "bilingual" and "multilingual" interchangeably. Traditionally, the first term refers to knowledge of two languages, and the other term refers to a person who speaks three or more. Annick DeHouwer (1999), a professor of language acquisition and multilingualism at the University of Erfurt, Germany, uses the term "bilingual" to describe a person who is fluent in more than one language. Meanwhile, Goh and Silver (2004) discovered multilingualism. One is the situation in a society where multiple languages exist. Therefore, to avoid misunderstanding, this study understands that bilingualism means the ability to use two languages, and multilingualism is multilingualism or multilingualism by a single speaker or a community of speakers. Defined as the use of principle.

PDS is a strategy used by parents or guardians when communicating with bilingual or multilingual children. PDS was first mentioned by Maurice Grammont in 1902 and has been extensively studied ever since. These strategies are within the framework of socialization (including Lanza, 1997; Ochs & Schiefferin, 2011; De Houwer, 2009). These discourse strategies are used when parents respond to the use of the language their child is learning, especially when the child is using a language that is not the parent's favorite language (or the language that encourages the child to use it). Works for., Or if the child mixes the two languages when communicating with the parent. Parents may want to increase their child's mix if there are signs of minority language wear or loss, even if language mix is not considered a problem. Lanza (1992, 1997) suggested that the way parents react to their children's language mix has a strong influence on their children's language choices. This proposal subsequently became known as the parental discourse hypothesis (Nicoladis & Genesee, 1998). Based on the strategy previously proposed by

Döpke (1986, 1988), Ochs (1988), and Ochs and Schieffelin (1984), Lanza (1992, p. 649) outlined five major PDSs: Minimal access, expressed guesswork, adult repetition, movement on and code switches for adults. Below are the definitions of these five strategies.

Minimal comprehension is a strategy in which a parent limits or pretends to be incomprehensible when the child speaks in a language that the parent does not like. According to Lanza's classification, this strategy is considered a single language because it creates the context used for the parent's preferred language to be understood. Studies show that this is one of the most effective strategies for influencing a child's language choices.

Explicit assumptions occur when a parent "guesses" what a child said in a non-preferred language and tries to paraphrase the utterance in the form of a yes / no question in the preferred language. In this strategy, parents show that they understand (whole or partially) what the child said, but hope the child by showing or pretending that they cannot respond in the same language. Encourage them to speak in their own language. To confirm this assumption of the parent. This strategy is probably not a persistence strategy, as the child does not always produce the same utterance in the desired language so that the child can easily see the parent's "guess" and continue the conversation.

Repeat indicates that the parent repeats what the child said in the desired language and understands what was said in another language, but implicitly indicates a language preference. Occurs in. This can take the form of directly translating what the child said or confirming the child's original utterances in the desired language.

Move On is when the parent continues the conversation and responds to the child's utterance without modifying or repeating the utterance in the native language. This strategy shows that the parent understands the other language and conveys the idea that it is okay to use the other language with the parent. This strategy is a bilingual conversation where parents use only their own language and children use only other languages.

Adult Code Switch is when a parent switches to the language used by the child to make a mixed utterance containing two languages or a completely different language. Children learn that code-switching makes sense and that they can continue to use it with their parents.

The above strategy can be placed in a continuum that shows the potential for a child to make a monolingual or bilingual context offer after entering into bilingual context negotiations through shuffle.

Methods

To gain the data, an open-ended questionnaire was sent to five families in Karawang and Semarang in which the children actively use English in their daily conversation. The parents of each surveyed family was invited to complete the questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed to find out what parental discourse strategies implemented in maintaining their communication in English. The questionnaire was made up of a number of questions which cover three categories including family's background, the children's use in English language, and interactional analysis (parent-child conversation). As the focus of the present study is on what have been identified as the recurrent explicit practices through which the parents negotiated and, at times, attempted to enforce the parent-child English language use, the data gathered were then analyzed qualitatively based on the theory of parental discourse strategies proposed by Lanza (1997: 262).

Findings & Discussion

This section will report the overall findings for five parents on the family language use, the PDS used by the parents, followed by the language of response by the children in relation to the PDS, showing their overall success in influencing the use of the minority language. The PDS looked for in the data included the strategies mentioned in Lanza (2004), including minimal grasp, expressed guess, repetition, move on, and adult code-switch. The following is the individual corpus result gained from the distributed questionnaire.

Family #1

The mother of the family reported that her son uses English sometimes, not too often, but he understands many vocabularies and understand what she said. He uses English when his mom speaks to him with English. The mother also testified that his son often rejects to communicate in English but by chance he never complains when she speaks English to him. To encourage the child's use of the minority language, the mother described that she repeatedly employs code switching as her strategy and she claimed that this is not categorically effective because sometimes her son responses well sometimes not.

Family #2

Different from the family number one, the parent participating in this study is the father. Referring to his responses, his children speak English here and there, not necessarily English. Most of the time they switch to Bahasa Indonesia when they think he does not really get what they mean due to difficulties in pronunciation. He further informed that they mostly use English when mimicking dialogues in English movies and English songs, or quotes they hear from social media.

He added that his children refuse to talk in English usually when it comes to conversations regarding important things like how they should focus on their study or help their parents do house chores. Related to the five parental discourse strategies, he uses 'move on' most of the time. Not only will it give an English answer to their Bahasa Indonesia question, but it will also give them a glimpse of how easy they can actually speak English with me. On his standpoint, this strategy is successful to enhance his children's bilingual development. But how the children respond to that depends on their mood. Sometimes they feel encouraged to speak English more, but there are times when they look stressful and reluctant to carry on with the conversations.

Family #3

Based on the mother's answers, her daughter uses English when she has good mood to speak it. She mostly uses English when the mother asks her to speak and when she watches YouTube, and she frequently repeats the English words from the YouTube games she watches. Like the two other families, there is rejection from her child when she was trying to have a conversation in English. This happens when she does not want to speak when she is tired, she watches TV or studies non-English subjects.

She avoids to speak up. Sometimes, she doesn't want to speak a whole day especially in Sunday. The strategy the mother use to cope with this situation is Adult Repetition. However, in her opinion, it is still not effective enough because sometimes her daughter is still confused to understand her English words when she asked her. The environment at school also does not support her to speak English much. She just speaks English with her English teacher at school, her private English teacher and her mom at home. The good point is she really likes to repeat her mom's pronunciation in her good mood. She eager to know new English words in YouTube games, but sometimes her mother does not have any idea about the context of the games.

Family #4

This family started introducing English to their son at three years old in the form of simple words. When he was in kindergarten, they began to give him more exposure like formulaic expressions and short conversations. As a result, their son get used to speak in English even in a thoughtful discussion. If the son did not understand what the parents were saying, they would try to explain using more modest language or giving an illustration or switching the

language into Bahasa Indonesia and sometimes Arabic. The father of the family claimed that this strategy is relatively effective in boosting their son to maintain their communication in English.

Family #5

Similar to the other families, this family also encourage their child to communicate in English, but what makes it different is that this family send their son to international school where English becomes the main language in instructions. It is not surprisingly if the mother affirmed that the child always speaks in English either at school or at home. Nonetheless, as a common child, rejection is sometimes found as well particularly when he is not around the school. To encourage her son, the mother uses code switching, but unfortunately the responses by the child occasionally does not go hand in hand with her expectation. Because of speaking English too much at school, the son sometimes responds positively, sometimes not.

From the data presented, it is obviously seen that the five families involved in this study have different parental discourse strategies. One family uses move on strategy, another uses adult repetition, and the rest use code switching. After looking at these overall results, code switching becomes the parental discourse strategy the parents mostly utilize in encouraging the use of the target language.

When considering general social norms and the idea of 'turn-taking' in which conversations are conducted by switching to the language the child is using, it makes sense that parents would choose a strategy that allows for the flow of conversation to continue. In other words, this strategy is used for facilitating family communication with each other despite language barriers.

This idea is supported by Chung (2006) stating that "in the interactions between family members, code-switching functions as a communicative strategy to clarify or reinforce the speaker's point, overcoming the gap of linguistic competence between the two languages".

In relation to this, code-switching is used to promote each other's comprehension between family members who have a different preferred language. Moreover, code-switching is employed to meet the complex communicative purposes, which fill a linguistic need for appropriate word or a lack of appropriate expression due to different cultural values. The purpose of the linguistic choices and the result created by the choice reveal that code-switching is used as a communicative strategy to achieve particular conversational goals in interactions with other bilingual speakers.

Furthermore, as it has been mentioned that the use of the strategies varied by each parent. These differences might link to what it calls as *family language policy* which focuses on the guidelines or 'rules' that families put into place in regards to language use within the home or family setting. According to Spolsky (2004), language family policy is defined as "language practices... the beliefs about language and language use; and any specific efforts to modify or influence that practice by any kind of language intervention, planning, or management." (p. 5).

Parents who wish for their children to speak a specific (generally minority) language in the home generally create these guidelines or practices with intention of the children becoming bilingual or multilingual, learning both the majority language spoken outside of the home, as well as the minority language spoken at home (or in some cases both the minority and majority languages). King (2008) points out that these guidelines may be implicit, or can be explicit and part of overt planning on the part of the parents to adhere to the specific use of the minority language and/or avoidance of the majority language.

According to Lanza (2004), studies of family language policy can be sorted according to the parental strategies employed in the promotion of bilingualism, as well as by the type, situation, and context of the families studied (Lanza, 1992; Romaine, 1995).

At the group level, it can be seen that the parental discourse strategies they use are not surely successful in maintaining the communication in minority language. This result validates Lanza's Parental Discourse Hypothesis, as well as the idea of placing the strategies on a monolingual to bilingual continuum in regards to the context they help create.

The hypothesis indicate that the more bilingual strategies (those that allow for both the minority and the majority languages to be used), move on and adult code-switch, are less likely to cause the child to use the minority language, creating a more bilingual context, whereas the more monolingual strategies (those that encourage only the use of the minority language), such as modelling and translation request, are more likely to encourage the use of the minority language, creating a more monolingual context.

It means that the more monolingual strategies used by the parents will have a higher rate of success in encouraging the children to use English, however the children in this study responded exclusively in Bahasa Indonesia to their parent's code switching. This, again, is in line with Lanza's Parental Discourse Hypothesis and the notion that the code-switch strategy will lead to a high level of use of the majority language by the child.

Conclusion

This study looked at the various strategies used by parents when attempting to solicit the desired use of the minority language, English, from young children living in Indonesia in a minority language context. Referring to overall results, it was found that parents mostly use code-switching in encouraging their children to communicate in the target language. When considering the successfulness of the parental discourse strategies, it generally supports Lanza's Parental Discourse Hypothesis that the more bilingual strategies like code-switching will impede the effectiveness in attempting to transmit a minority language while communicating as a family.

This study therefore contributes to the fields of minority language maintenance and family language policy as the examination of the child responses to the parental discourse strategies used show which strategies proved influential in encouraging the children to use the minority language with their parents.

Considering its limitations, this study also suggests to involve more participants and comprise varieties of supporting media (audio and/or visual) available with the transcripts to present an empirical data of the child's language mixing in interaction which each parent and how the parent reacts to that mixing which may result in a more comprehensive analysis.

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