

# TRANSMITTING LANGUAGE STRATEGIES OF MIXED MARRIAGE PARENTS TO THEIR CHILDREN (A CASE STUDY)

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## **Abstrak**

*Pernikahan campuran sebagai salah satu faktor yang menyebabkan seseorang menjadi dwibahasa merupakan isu yang sangat menarik. Pernikahan campuran melibatkan dua orang dari Negara yang berbeda dan memiliki bahasa yang berbeda pula. Artikel ini bertujuan untuk mendeskripsikan strategi mentransfer bahasa oleh orangtua pernikahan campuran kepada anak-anaknya dan menganalisis pilihan bahasa dari anak-anak tersebut. Data diperoleh dari dua keluarga pernikahan campuran melalui metode penelitian lapangan dan kemudian dianalisis secara kualitatif. Teori yang digunakan adalah teori oleh Romaine (1995) dan fishman (dalam Holmes, 1992). Hasil dan pembahasan menunjukkan bahwa keluarga pertama, pernikahan campuran antara laki-laki Australia dengan perempuan Indonesia, cenderung menerapkan strategi tipe 6, yaitu strategi "Mixed Languages". Sedangkan keluarga kedua, pernikahan campuran antara laki-laki Cina yang berasal dari Hongkong dengan perempuan Indonesia menerapkan strategi tipe 5, yaitu ibu selalu menggunakan bahasa Cantonese, yang bukan merupakan bahasa ibunya kepada anak. Strategi yang diterapkan oleh orangtua di keluarga pertama mengakibatkan anak memiliki keahlian yang sama dalam penggunaan bahasa Inggris dan Indonesia. Sedangkan anak di keluarga kedua lebih sering menggunakan Cantonese akibat strategi yang diterapkan oleh orangtuanya.*

**Kata kunci:** *pernikahan campuran, dwibahasa, pentransferan bahasa, dan pilihan bahasa*

## **1. Background of the study**

As one of factors that causes a person to be bilingual, mixed marriage is an interesting issue to be observed, especially about transmitting language strategies of mixed marriage parents. Mixed marriages involve two people who come from different countries and speak different languages. Hauwaert (2011) states "having parents who speak different languages is often seen as a gift for children, who will naturally pick up both languages." However, the difference of parents' languages

will influence the children in acquiring the language. The children will try to express what they mean by using the words that they have heard. Therefore children absolutely need to learn both languages simply to communicate with their parents.

Bilingual parents have a choice whether to educate their children only in one of their languages or to educate them bilingually. Sometimes it will become a problem for mixed marriage parents to transmit language to their children. Every parent also has their own strategies in transmitting language to their children.

## **2. Problems of the study**

1. What strategies are used by the parents in transmitting language to their children?
2. What languages are chosen by the children of mixed marriage family in communicating in certain domain?

## **3. Aims of the study**

1. to describe the strategies used by the parents in transmitting language to their children.
2. to analyze the languages chosen by the children and language mostly used by the children in communicating in certain domain.

## **4. Research Method**

In producing a scientific research, the applications of the method is needed. In this study, the methodology was divided into three. They are data source, method and technique of collecting data, and method and technique of analyzing data.

### **4.1 Data Source**

Primary data source which was taken and analyzed in this study is in oral form. The data source was taken from spoken language produced by the members

of the mixed marriage families in conversations and also the interview result of the parents. There are two mixed marriage families that were observed. One is between Indonesian woman and Australian man who have a son, three years old. They live in Bali, Indonesia. The other one is between Indonesian woman and Chinese man who have a three years old daughter and they live in Hongkong. The child in each family was observed in family and friendship domain. Especially the second family was observed when they came to Indonesia. However, the child activities with her friends were observed when they came back to Hongkong through video call because her friends are there.

#### **4.2 Method and Technique of Collecting Data**

The methods of collecting data in this study are observation and interviews. The instrument which was used in collecting the data in this study is voice recorder. The technique of collecting data in this study was done by recording, interview and note taking. Recording was done by observing the child when the child was communicating to the other members of the families and friends. After recording, the data were transcribed and verified with the parents to check the result of transcription. The structured interview was done with the parents in each family. Then, note taking was done to complete the data.

#### **4.3 Method and Technique of Analyzing Data**

The collected data were analyzed using qualitative method. It was through several techniques. After recording the languages that are used by the members of the family in conversation, first technique in analyzing the data was organizing and preparing the data for analysis. The second technique was transcribing the data and the result of interviews from each family. The third was classifying. The next technique was coding. After that the data from the families were sorted and chosen. And then all the data were read carefully. The last technique was analyzing the data based on the theories.

## 5. Result and Discussion

Following Harding and Riley (1986: 47 – 8), Romaine (1995:183) has classified the main types of early childhood bilingualism related to her findings. These strategies are as follows:

1. One person — one language. The parents have different native languages and each speak their own language to the child from birth. One of these is the community language.
2. Non-dominant home language. The language of one of the parents is the community language; Both parents speak the non-dominant language to the child
3. Non-dominant home language without community support. The parents speak their own language to the child. The difference is that the parents both have the non-community home language as native language.
4. Double non-dominant home language without community support. The parents each speak their own language to the child from birth, with the difference that the community language is neither parent's language.
5. Non-native parents. One of the parents always addresses the child in a language which is not his/her native language.
6. Mixed languages. Both parents are bilingual, and both use more than one language in addressing the child.

Both families who were observed decided to raise their child bilingually. The parents in family 1 decided to introduce their languages to their child simultaneously. They introduced both English and Indonesian language to their child from birth. The parents tend to apply strategy type 6 proposed by Romaine (1995), that is mixed languages to their son. While the parents in family 2 applied strategy type 5, in which one of the parents always addresses the child in a language which is not his/her native language.

In family 1, mixed marriage between Australian man and Indonesian woman, it was found that mother of this family 1 speaks both English and

Indonesian language since the child was born. While father of this family always speaks his native language, English. Although it is only the mother who code-switch and mixes languages in transmitting language to the child, the strategy of mixed marriage parents in family 1 is considered strategy type 6 “Mixed languages” because father of the family can speak Indonesian language fluently and he often uses it when communicating to his wife (mother of family 1). It means that the child also hears Indonesian from father when he speaks to mother and the other members of the family. As a consequence, the child also uses both English and Indonesian language to his mother, only uses English to his father, and always uses Indonesian language to his Indonesian grandmother, servant, and friends in his environment. The child has same proficiency in using English and Indonesian language. In family and friendship domain, the child uses English and Indonesian language equally.

The second family is mixed marriage between Chinese man and Indonesian woman who live in Hongkong. They have a daughter. Mother of this family is an Indonesian who always addresses her child in Cantonese which is not her native language, while father speaks Cantonese to his child and then introduced English when the child was at two and half years old. Mother in family 2 doesn't introduce her native languages, Javanese and Indonesian language. As a consequence, the child mostly adopts and uses Cantonese in communication in family and friendship domain. The child still cannot differentiate when she has to use Cantonese and English. Sometimes she mixes the languages

## **6. Conclusion**

The finding shows that those two families have different way in introducing languages and raising their children bilingually. The parents of family 1 introduced their languages to their son simultaneously and parents of family 2 introduced their languages to their daughter successively. They also have their own strategy in transmitting the languages to their children. Parents in family 1 tend to follow strategy type 6 “mixed languages”, while parents in family 2 tend to apply strategy type 5, in which mother of the family always addresses her child

in a language, Cantonese, which is not her native language. Because of the strategy that is applied by the parents in family 1, the child tends to use English language and Indonesian language to his mother and only use English to his father. The child only use Indonesian language when communicate to his Indonesian grandmother, servant, and his friends in his environment. It means that in family and friendship domain, the child of family 1 uses English and Indonesian language equally. While the strategy that is applied by parents of family 2 makes the child in this family mostly uses Cantonese in family and friendship domain

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