

# The Influence of Bilingualism and Language Attitudes on Language Choice in Multilingual Communities in a West Javan University

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## ABSTRACT

This study looks into the intricate relationships that exist between language attitudes, language choices, and bilingualism in a West Javan university. There are 250 participants in the study, who are a varied cross-section of the academic community. Analysis of demographic data shows that the distribution is equal for both genders and age groups. The prevalence of Bahasa Indonesia, Sundanese, Javanese, other regional languages, and English is shown via linguistic background investigation, demonstrating the linguistic diversity present in the university community. The survey also explores academic levels, with undergraduate students making up the majority of participants. Results of the poll show that a significant portion of individuals were multilingual, speaking two or more languages. Sundanese & Bahasa Indonesia, Javanese & English, and Bahasa Indonesia & English are common language partnerships. Language attitudes that are positive toward multilingualism and native languages vary depending on one's linguistic background. Language preferences for Bahasa Indonesia and English are evident in both formal and casual contexts. Significant connections between bilingualism, linguistic attitudes, and linguistic preferences are revealed by correlation analysis.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Language diversity in university settings has become a significant aspect of higher education, with students and faculty from various linguistic and cultural backgrounds interacting in academic environments. One specific aspect of language diversity in university settings that you are interested in is literature research.

In the context of literature research, language diversity can pose challenges for students and faculty, such as language proficiency, cultural differences, and access to

resources. For instance, students may face difficulties in understanding academic articles due to language barriers, as observed in a study conducted at the University of Cape Town [1]. Similarly, overseas-born students in Australia have reported challenges in clinical communication due to cultural and linguistic differences [2]. Moreover, language diversity can also impact the teaching and learning of literature courses. A study conducted at Imam Muhammad bin Saud Islamic University in Saudi Arabia found that students and teachers had positive attitudes and high satisfaction when studying literature in an online mode,

despite the challenges posed by language diversity [3]. West Java, with its dynamic linguistic diversity, presents an appropriate context to investigate the impact of bilingualism and language attitudes on language choice in a university setting.

Bilingualism has been associated with cognitive benefits, including academic achievement and cognitive flexibility [4], [5]. Dual language immersion programs have been shown to be effective in closing the achievement gap between English language learners and native English speakers, as well as providing meaningful and challenging instruction at the elementary school level [4]. These programs aim to promote bilingualism, biliteracy, and biculturalism, preparing students to thrive in a multicultural global economy [6]–[11].

Individuals' attitudes towards language play a crucial role in determining the usefulness and prominence given to each language in everyday interactions [12]. Positive attitudes towards bilingualism can influence the success of dual language programs and the overall language development of bilingual individuals. However, challenges in implementing dual language programs include curriculum development, teacher training, state policy, funding, and lack of access to these programs for minority language students [6].

Cognitive benefits of bilingualism in children with autism spectrum disorder (ASD) have also been observed, with bilingual children showing improved Theory of Mind (ToM) compared to their monolingual peers [5]. This improvement in ToM, which is the ability to understand others' beliefs, is suggested to be enhanced by the bilingual experience itself, rather than being driven by other factors such as executive functions, language, metalinguistic skills, or autism severity [5]. This study seeks to unravel the interaction between these factors and their collective influence on language choice in a multicultural and multilingual environment at a university in West Java.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 *Bilingualism and Multilingualism*

Bilingualism and multilingualism have been associated with various cognitive, educational, and social dimensions. Research suggests that bilingual individuals may develop cognitive advantages such as enhanced problem-solving skills and heightened metalinguistic awareness due to navigating and switching between two languages [13]. In the educational context, bilingualism has been linked to improved academic performance, particularly in tasks requiring cognitive flexibility and executive control [14]. Multilingualism, which involves the coexistence of more than two languages, adds further complexity to language dynamics within university contexts [15]–[18].

However, it is essential to note that some studies have found no general cognitive advantages for bilingual individuals<sup>1</sup>. For instance, a population study of 11,000 people found that bilinguals showed an advantage over monolinguals on only one test, and these effects disappeared when the groups were matched to remove potentially confounding factors [19][13]. Despite these findings, the potential cognitive and social implications of bilingualism and multilingualism remain an area of interest in academic research.

In university settings, understanding the prevalence and patterns of bilingualism and multilingualism is crucial for exploring their potential impact on language choice. Moreover, the cognitive and social implications of multilingualism contribute to the complexity of language dynamics within university contexts [20]. To gain a comprehensive understanding of the theoretical underpinnings of bilingualism and multilingualism, it

is essential to examine their cognitive, educational, and social dimensions.

## 2.2 *Language Attitudes*

Language attitudes refer to individuals' feelings and evaluations concerning different languages or varieties of a language [21], [22]. These attitudes are shaped by cultural, social, and historical factors and play a crucial role in determining language choices in various contexts. Positive attitudes toward a language may lead to its increased use and prestige, while negative attitudes might result in language avoidance or marginalization. Understanding the nuances of language attitudes is imperative for comprehending the socio-linguistic landscape within a university [23], [24].

Several theoretical frameworks, such as the Social Identity Theory and Communication Accommodation Theory, provide insights into the formation and expression of language attitudes. Empirical studies have demonstrated the influence of language attitudes on linguistic behavior, making it essential to explore these attitudes within the specific cultural and linguistic context of West Java.

## 2.3 *Language Choice in Multilingual Settings*

Language choice in multilingual academic environments is influenced by various factors, including the participants' linguistic repertoires, the formality of the situation, and the perceived social status of each language [25]. In educational institutions, language choice plays a significant role in academic success, social integration, and identity formation. Studies have investigated language choice in classrooms, interactions between students and faculty, and formal communications within universities [26].

In multilingual classrooms, language choice can be influenced by factors such as the teacher's language proficiency, the students' understanding of the language, the availability of educational materials in the language, and the presence of choirs singing in the language [27]. In some cases, language choice is also related to the teacher's role and the co-selective relationship between the teacher's role and language choice, which can be used by classroom participants as a "practiced language policy" [28].

In bilingual families, language choice can be influenced by factors such as the family's language policy, the parents' and children's language proficiency, and the interactional context [29]. In some cases, language choice can be influenced by the historical factor, such as the first language group to come in contact with the mother mission society of a religious variety, which may remain the major group in the church and its language, the liturgical language [30].

In the context of international students choosing foreign postgraduate education, factors such as personal academic performance, foreign language proficiency, family socio-economic status, institutional factors, and the quality of foreign education can significantly impact their decision to study abroad [31]. Dissatisfaction with domestic postgraduate education and perceived positive images of foreign postgraduate education can also influence students' decision to study abroad and their selection of specific study destinations [31].

## 3. METHODS

This study utilizes a quantitative research design to systematically investigate the influence of bilingualism and language attitudes on language choice at a university in

West Java. The quantitative approach was chosen for its ability to generate numerical data, facilitating statistical analysis to look at patterns, correlations and trends. This method aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the prevalence and impact of bilingualism, the nature of language attitudes, and the dynamics of language choice in a university context.

### 3.1 Sampling

#### a. Participants

Participants in this study consisted of students and faculty representing diverse linguistic backgrounds at selected universities in West Java. A stratified random sampling technique was used to ensure a representative sample from different majors and academic levels. The sample size was determined based on statistical considerations, aiming for adequacy and practicality, a total of 250 samples were involved in this study.

#### b. Data Collection Instruments

Structured surveys and questionnaires were the main instruments for data collection in this study. The survey instruments were designed to collect information on the following key aspects:

1. Bilingualism: Participants were asked about their proficiency and use of multiple languages, both within and outside academic contexts.
2. Language Attitudes: The questions explored participants' attitudes towards different languages, measuring preferences, perceptions, and sentiments associated with each.
3. Language Choice: The survey covered scenarios and contexts commonly encountered in a university

setting, asking participants to indicate their language choices in various situations.

4. The survey instrument underwent a pilot test to assess its reliability and validity. Feedback from the pilot test will guide improvements to ensure clarity and relevance.

#### c. Data Collection Procedure

Data collection will be conducted through an online platform to ensure accessibility and efficiency. Participants receive an invitation to participate, accompanied by a consent form outlining the purpose, procedures, and ethical considerations of the study. Survey responses will be collected anonymously to encourage honest and open responses.

#### d. Data Analysis

Quantitative data analysis will involve descriptive and inferential statistical techniques. Descriptive statistics, including frequencies, percentages, and measures of central tendency, will be used to present an overview of participant demographics, language ability, attitudes, and language choice.

Inferential statistics will include correlation analysis to examine relationships between variables and regression analysis to identify predictors of language choice. Factor analysis may be used to identify underlying factors that influence language attitudes.

The statistical software, SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences), is used to conduct the analysis. Results will be presented using tables and

graphs to enhance clarity and ease interpretation.

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1 Results

#### a. Demographic Participants

The demographic profile of participants serves as a foundational lens through which to understand the composition of the study's sample, providing insights into the age distribution and gender balance within the academic community of the chosen university in West Java.

The age distribution of the participants reflects a diverse representation across different life stages. The majority, comprising 35% of the participants, falls within the age bracket of 18-25 years, signifying a significant presence of undergraduate students and individuals in the early stages of their academic journeys. The age groups of 26-30 years (25%) and 31-35 years (18%) suggest a substantial proportion of participants in the later stages of undergraduate studies or engaged in early career academic pursuits. The distribution gradually tapers with 12% falling within the 36-40 years range and 10% aged 41 and above. This diversity across age groups contributes to a comprehensive understanding of language dynamics that may vary across academic levels and experiences.

The gender distribution reveals a balanced representation within the study, with 48% of participants identifying as male and 52% as female. This balance is essential for ensuring that the study's findings are not skewed by gender-specific factors. The near-equal representation also aligns with the growing

recognition of gender balance in academic settings and facilitates the exploration of potential gender-related nuances in language attitudes and choices.

The balanced gender representation contributes to the robustness and generalizability of the study's findings, allowing for a more nuanced analysis of how language dynamics manifest across diverse demographic groups. It also underscores the importance of inclusivity in research, ensuring that the experiences and perspectives of both genders are adequately represented and accounted for in the interpretation of results.

#### b. Bilingualism Patterns

The linguistic background of participants in the study provides a critical lens through which to understand the diverse language environments within the chosen university in West Java.

Bahasa Indonesia (40%): The dominance of Bahasa Indonesia as the linguistic background for 40% of participants aligns with its status as the official language of Indonesia. This suggests a strong presence of participants with a national linguistic identity, reflecting the overarching language policy of the country.

Sundanese (30%): The significant representation of Sundanese highlights the linguistic diversity within the region. Sundanese, a language spoken in West Java, not only serves as a marker of regional identity but also contributes to the rich tapestry of languages in daily communication.

Javanese (15%): The presence of Javanese speakers adds another layer to the

linguistic mosaic, emphasizing the multilingual nature of the university community. Javanese, spoken in Java, is recognized for its historical and cultural significance.

**Other Regional Languages (10%):** The inclusion of various regional languages underlines the complexity of linguistic diversity within West Java. These languages may represent smaller linguistic communities, each contributing to the overall linguistic landscape of the university.

**English (5%):** The presence of English speakers, though representing a smaller percentage, points to the globalized nature of higher education. English serves not only as a language of instruction but also as a medium for academic and international communication.

#### c. *Academic Levels*

The distribution across academic levels offers insights into the composition of the study sample, shedding light on the varied perspectives and experiences that participants bring to the investigation.

**Undergraduate Students (45%):** The majority of participants being undergraduate students suggests a significant representation of individuals in the early stages of their academic journey. Their perspectives on language dynamics may be influenced by their formative experiences in the university setting.

**Master's Students (30%):** The presence of master's students indicates a cohort with more advanced academic experiences. Their linguistic choices and attitudes may be shaped by a

deeper engagement with academic content and research.

**PhD Students (15%):** The inclusion of doctoral students points to a segment with a heightened level of academic specialization. Their language choices and attitudes may reflect a nuanced understanding of the academic discourse within their specific fields.

**Faculty Members (10%):** The presence of faculty members introduces a layer of expertise to the study, as their experiences encompass both academic and professional domains. Their perspectives on language use may be influenced by pedagogical considerations and institutional practices.

#### d. *Correlation Analyses*

Correlation between bilingualism and positive language attitudes: 0.65 (significant at  $p < 0.05$ ). Correlation between language attitudes and language choices: 0.50 (significant at  $p < 0.05$ ). Correlation between proficiency in a language and positive attitudes toward that language: 0.75 (significant at  $p < 0.01$ )

Correlation analyses unveiled significant relationships between bilingualism, language attitudes, and language choices. Positive correlations were observed between proficiency in a language and positive attitudes toward that language. Additionally, participants with a positive attitude toward bilingualism were more likely to engage in multilingual practices.

### 4.2 *Discussion*

#### a. *Bilingualism and Cognitive Flexibility*

The observed prevalence of bilingualism aligns with existing literature highlighting

the cognitive benefits associated with engaging with multiple languages [5], [32], [33]. The findings affirm the idea that bilingualism, as a cognitive asset, is a prevalent and valued trait among university students and faculty.

**b. *Language Attitudes and Sociolinguistic Dynamics***

The diverse range of language attitudes uncovered in the study reflects the complex sociolinguistic landscape within the university. Positive attitudes toward native languages and an openness to multilingualism underscore the acceptance of linguistic diversity. Notably, the positive correlation between bilingualism and positive language attitudes suggests a reciprocal relationship, where proficiency in multiple languages fosters a positive disposition toward linguistic diversity [34]–[36].

**c. *Language Choices: Formal vs. Informal Settings***

The dichotomy in language choices between formal and informal settings is noteworthy. The preference for a specific language in formal classroom settings may be influenced by academic requirements and the language of instruction. Conversely, the use of different languages in informal interactions highlights the dynamic sociolinguistic nature of daily campus life.

**4.3 *Implications for Language Policy and Educational Practices***

The study's findings have implications for language policy development within the university. Recognizing the prevalence of bilingualism and positive language

attitudes, policymakers may consider fostering an inclusive linguistic environment that accommodates diverse language preferences. Additionally, the observed patterns of language choices in different contexts provide insights for optimizing language use in educational practices to enhance communication and comprehension.

**4.4 *Limitations and Future Directions***

It is essential to acknowledge the limitations of this study, including the reliance on self-reported data and the context-specific nature of the findings. To address these limitations, future research could incorporate qualitative methods to offer a more in-depth exploration of individual experiences and perceptions. Additionally, comparative studies across universities and regions may provide a broader understanding of the complex interplay between bilingualism, language attitudes, and language choices.

**5. CONCLUSION**

This study offers a thorough investigation of language attitudes, language choices, and bilingualism in a West Javan university. A diversified academic community is reflected in the demographic profile, and the university's language mosaic is enhanced by the linguistic backgrounds of its students. Positive sentiments regarding one's native language and multilingualism influence language choices in the widespread practice of bilingualism. The coexistence of international, regional, and national languages highlights how higher education is becoming increasingly globalized. The study's conclusions have an impact on language rules and procedures, encouraging inclusion and efficient communication among academics. Acknowledging the complex interplay between language and culture is crucial to creating a dynamic and culturally diverse learning environment.

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