

# Attitudes Towards Indonesian Varieties by Jakarta Indonesian-Speaking Adolescents in Depok City

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## ABSTRACT

Younger generations in Depok City, West Java, generally use Colloquial Jakarta Indonesian in daily activities. In certain condition and situations, especially at school, they also use another variety of Indonesian, the Standard Indonesian. It is important to see how they use each variety in daily life, as reflected in their attitudes. This study examines these adolescents' language attitudes through a questionnaire as the main instrument. The focus of this study is the Indonesian varieties, Standard Indonesian and Colloquial Jakarta Indonesian. Respondents in this study were students of a junior and a senior high school (N=604). The questionnaires were distributed at schools. Three items were examined: pride, importance of the variety, and intention to improve the variety. Data were analyzed quantitatively. The result shows that all respondents tended to have positive attitudes towards both varieties. Nevertheless, results from statistical analysis show several findings. In terms of pride, importance, and respondents' intention for improvement, Standard Indonesian always had higher scores than those of Colloquial Jakarta Indonesian. This study also indicates that both varieties of Indonesian have their own status and function in school setting.

**Keywords:** *Colloquial Jakarta Indonesian, Indonesian-speaking adolescent, language attitudes, standard Indonesian, varieties*

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In urban areas such as Jakarta and its surroundings, many languages exist: Indonesian, local and regional languages, and foreign languages. At least, people speak Indonesian whose varieties—Standard Indonesian (hereinafter SI) and Colloquial Jakarta Indonesian (hereinafter CJI)—are widely used. Both SI and CJI share several linguistic features, but there are also features distinguishing both varieties (for the detail, see Sneddon, 2006; Kushartanti, 2015).

Socially, both SI and CJI have their own function. SI, the formal variety of Indonesian and the national language, is used as the language of government, used in national mass media (newspapers, television, and radio news programs) and formal speeches. SI is also the main medium of instruction at most educational settings. Meanwhile, CJI, the informal variety of Indonesian, is used as the means of informal communication.

Sneddon (2003) described the linguistic situation of Indonesian as diglossic: there were dichotomy of high and low Indonesian varieties, where the “standard” was

represented by SI and “non-standard” by CJI. The latter is nowadays increasingly used in urban youth magazines (which are published in printed and online forms), popular literatures, and songs. It can be said that CJI has raised its status as “standard informal” Indonesian (as predicted by Anton Moeliono, which was cited in Oetomo, 1990), influences throughout the country due to the increasing use of online and social media. Moreover, Sneddon (2003) also added that people from other places of Indonesian who have visited Jakarta strive to use this variety. This indicates that CJI is influential for Indonesians.

Younger generations of Indonesian who live in Jakarta and its surroundings generally use CJI. It is the first variety of Indonesian which is generally learned as their first language (see also Wouk, 1999) at home. While SI is generally learned formally at school, there are many families who introduce SI earlier through television programs, storytelling or reading. Despite the fact which using SI is favourable at school, where formality (or formal language) is taught and learned, the use of CJI is not prohibited.

Like those who live in Jakarta, younger generations of Indonesian in the neighbouring area such as Depok are also confronted with at least SI and CJI. It is important to see how these Indonesian-speaking young generations use each variety in daily life, as reflected in their attitudes. Given that both varieties have social functions, do these young generations think that both varieties are equally important, and therefore, do they intend to improve the use of both varieties?

This study examines language attitudes of younger generations of Indonesia. In the world of youth, attitudes to languages are associated with identity, meaning, and value, especially in multilingual context. Multilingual people can choose the language and adjust the language to their needs (see Dégi, 2012). The choice and adjustment, however, are influenced by attitudes to language, as the impact of language ideology and policy in community, both in smaller and larger scopes, especially when it is dealing with education and younger generations (see, for example Rajah-Carim, 2007; Letsholo, 2009; Delarue & De Caluwe, 2015; Nouri, 2015; Reuster-Jahn, 2016; Ubalde et al., 2017). Younger generations' attitudes to language can also change due to political reasons, as found in Reuster-Jahn (2016) and Ubalde et al. (2017).

Subiyatningsih (2017) and Nuryani (2019) found that Indonesian students tended to have negative attitudes towards SI in media but were proud of using the variety. However, they did not examine the comparison between SI and CJI, which is the main question in the current study.

The aim of this study is to explain the attitudes towards SI and CJI by Indonesian-speaking younger generations, especially adolescents in Depok City. The main foci of this study are the pride, importance, and intention for improvements of these varieties as perceived by adolescents. This study was conducted in educational setting, which will be taken into account as an explanation of the findings. Our respondents were teenagers, students of junior- and senior high schools.

As indicated by Ubalde et al. (2017), young people, including adolescents, tend to incline to change. Therefore, studying attitudes towards language (and varieties) by this age group is very important, which will contribute the study of language change and policy.

## 2. METHOD

There are three broad approaches to study language attitudes (see Garrett, 2010) *direct measures*, *indirect measures*, and *societal treatment*. Using questionnaires or interviews with structured questions are examples of data elicitation in the first approach, whereas using *Matched Guise Technique* as devised by Lambert et al.

(in Schilling, 2013) is one of example in the second approach. Meanwhile, societal treatment, according to Garrett (2010, p. 142) is "[...] seen in terms of the 'treatment' afforded languages and language varieties within society and to their users." Study of many sources in public domain such as advertisement is an example of this approach. This study uses direct measures approach with questionnaire as the main instrument.

The sample of the population were students at a public junior high school and a public senior high school, both located in the heart of Depok City. As already mentioned previously, the questionnaire was the main instrument. However, before conducting the survey, we did a brief observation on the language use (outside classroom) among students and between students and their teachers. This study was conducted upon permission from headmasters and teachers.

This study elicits adolescents' thought on statements which relate to both SI and CJI. According to Dörnyei and Taguchi (2010), questionnaires on attitudes concern evaluative responses to a particular target which can be modelled by certain significant people (or institution). Moreover, Garrett (2010) indicates that people tend to have attitude on the basis of daily norms. School, where the current study was conducted, indirectly taught certain attitudes toward both varieties, including pride of the language, importance, and motivation to improve the language they use.

As alluded to previously, three items of attitudes were examined: pride, importance, and intent to improve the varieties. The statement for examining the pride of the varieties was *Saya bangga dapat berbahasa Indonesia baku/Indonesia Jakarta* 'I am proud to speak Standard Indonesian/Colloquial Jakarta Indonesian'; for examining the importance of the varieties was *Kemampuan berbahasa Indonesia baku/Indonesia Jakarta merupakan hal yang penting dalam kehidupan kita sehari-hari* 'the ability of using Standard Indonesian/Colloquial Jakarta Indonesian is an important thing in our daily life'; and for examining respondent's intent to improve the varieties was *Saya harus meningkatkan kemampuan berbahasa Indonesia baku/Indonesia Jakarta* 'I have to improve my Standard Indonesian/Colloquial Jakarta Indonesian'.

We used Likert scales to measure respondents' attitudes: strongly disagree (value =1), disagree (value =2), unsure (value =3), agree (value =4), strongly agree (value =5). We used descriptive statistical analyses. The tendencies of the attitudes were examined from the means of the values. Comparison between SI and CJI were analysed through paired sample *t*-test. We also examined individual choices through the analysis of frequencies.

The questionnaire also contained questions on respondents' demographic information, including their ethnicity, first language, language used at and outside home. Data on this information were also analysed quantitatively. The profile of the respondents is presented in the following subsection

### 3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In this section, we present our findings in the analysis in two subsections. The first subsection presents the profile of the respondents, especially the linguistic profile, and the second present the respondents' attitudes towards both varieties.

#### 3.1. The profile of the respondents

Our respondents were students of a junior and a senior high school which located in Depok City. Totally, we have 604 respondents. Table 1 presents the number of respondents based on gender and level of education in detail. The Table 1 below also shows that there are 22 out of 604 respondents left the gender section blank.

The age range of the respondents was between 13 and 19 years old (M=16). These students were from various ethnic groups. In majority, the fathers were Javanese (41,2%), Sundanese (16,7%) and Betawi (12,4%); others were from different ethnic groups (Minangkabau, Batak, Chinese, Acehnese, Malay, Manadonese). Some of the fathers were from inter-ethnic marriages (8%). Meanwhile, the mothers were from Javanese (32,8%), Sundanese (21,4%), Betawi (14,2%), inter-ethnic marriages (10,2%), Minang (7,1%), Batak (5,8%); others come from different ethnic groups (Malay, Acehnese, Palembang, Manadonese, and Chinese).

**Table 1.** Number of respondents based on gender and level of education

Level of education	Gender			Total
	Male	Female	NA	
SMP	118	166	3	287
SMA	116	182	19	317
Total	234	348	22	604

SMP = *sekolah menengah pertama* 'junior high school'; SMA = *sekolah menengah atas* 'senior high school'

In majority, their first language was Indonesian (87,4%). We assumed that it was CJI, as proposed by Wouk (1999), which was acquired by children in Jakarta and the surroundings, including Depok. Of 604 respondents, 2% were bilingual first language acquirers of Indonesian and foreign language as their first language, 1,7% were bilingual first language acquirers of regional language, and 1,3% acquired English. Several of the respondents also claimed that they still used

regional language (50, %). Some of them used foreign language (62,9%). To recapitulate, it is rightly stated that the respondents in this study were multilinguals.

As we observed, students spoke mainly CJI in interactions among themselves and with their teachers outside the classroom. This finding indicates that CJI was the variety they were exposed to in daily communication. Nevertheless, we found that style-shifting, from SI to CJI, or the other way around, was common, as in the following conversational segment between two students who discussed over a subject.

*Ini gimana ya. Kalo ber-dasar-kan teori yang*  
 this how yes if ACT.INTR-base-INTR theory which  
 SI/CJI CJI SI/CJI CJI BI-BI-BI BI/CJI BI/CJI

*tadi kita harus memper-banyak peluang untuk*  
 last IPL must ACT.TR-many opportunity to  
 SI/CJI SI/CJI SI/CJI SI SI SI/CJI

*meng-hasil-kan ke-simpul-an yang benar.*  
 ACT.TR-result-TR NOUN-knot-NOUN which right  
 SI SI/CJI SI/CJI SI

*Kayak-nya yang paling susah ya memper-banyak.*  
 seem-DEF which most difficult yes ACT.TR-many  
 CJI SI/CJI SI/CJI SI/CJI SI/CJI SI

*peluang itu*  
 opportunity that  
 SI SI/CJI

'What should we do? Based on the theory, we should increase chances to have the right conclusion. It seems that increasing the chances are the most difficult thing.'

Findings that they can style-shift indicates that these children were bi-stylistic. Note that the shift of SI and CJI was so "fluid", that they even mixed the style. The finding on the style-shift which relates to bi-style also strengthens Kushartanti's (2015) findings in the study on stylistic variation by younger generation in Jakarta and the surroundings (including Depok).

We also overheard code-mixing of SI, CJI, English, and some regional languages (Sundanese and Betawi) in another conversation between students, as in the following example.

*Next aku back up-in data-nya*  
 next 1st back.up -TR data -DEF  
 Eng SI/CJI Eng -CJ Ind/Eng SI/CJI  
 'next time I will make a back-up for the data'

*Bener-an tadi aku lieur manteng-in file bejibun*  
 true -ADJ just 1st dizzy watch-TR file many  
 CJI SI/CJI SI/CJI Snd Btw-CJI Eng Btw  
 'Really I was so rocky to keep an eye of that stacked file'

Note that the speaker did code-mix, in single words (next (Eng.), lieur (Snd.), file (Eng.) and bejibun (Btw.)), and in word internal (see Muysken, 2011) in back-up-in

which is a mix of English word and CJI suffix. Given that these students were indicated as multilinguals, as well, as found in the questionnaires, such code-mixing is also a common phenomenon at school.

**3.2. Respondents’ attitudes towards both varieties**

This section discusses the tendencies in respondents’ attitudes towards the pride, importance, and intention to improve both SI and CJI. They are summarized and presented in Table 2.

**Table 2.** Comparisons between SI and CJI based on three items

(1=strongly disagree; 5=strongly agree)

N=604	Pride		Importance		Improvement	
	SI	CJI	SI	CJI	SI	CJI
M	4,5	4,1	4,3	3,8	4,5	3,5
SD	0,7	0,7	0,8	0,9	0,7	0,9

M=mean; SD=standard deviation

The results indicate several findings. First, the respondents tended to be proud of using both SI and CJI (agree to strongly agree). The findings show that these respondents had positive attitudes towards both varieties. Nevertheless, it was indicated that SI had the higher score than CJI. A paired sample t-test was conducted to examine the difference between both varieties. There was significant difference in the scores of SI (M=4,5; SD=0,7) and CJI (M=4,1; SD=0,7) in terms of pride ( $t(603)=12,3$ ,  $p=0,000$ ). These findings also show that both have their own functions, aligned with Sneddon’s (2006) description on the language of educated speakers in Jakarta: while competence in SI associates with educational level, CJI is associated with higher social status. From individual choices, we found that 94,7% of the respondents have positive attitudes towards SI. We can also infer that CJI was regarded to be a high linguistic prestige. From our observation on the tendencies in individual choices, it was found that 83,5% of respondents perceived CJI positively in terms of pride.

It is indicated that the respondents tended to have different attitudes on the importance of SI (M=4,3; SD=0,8) and CJI (M=3,8; SD=0,9). From a paired sample t-test, it was found that the difference was significant ( $t(603)=11,4$ ,  $p=0,000$ ). In line with the afore mentioned finding, they also had different attitudes on the intention for improvement of SI (M=4,5, SD=0,7) and CJI (M=3,5, SD= 0,9). From a paired sample t-test, it was found that the difference was also significant ( $t(603)=24$ ,  $p=0,000$ ). This finding indicates that the need to improve SI is more important for these students, as already mentioned previously. This finding shows that, for these students, SI

is an important variety to be learned, as an impact of the language policy in Indonesia, especially in educational domain. In the Law No. 24 of 2009 Article 29 Paragraph 1 it is stated that “*Bahasa Indonesia wajib digunakan sebagai bahasa pengantar dalam pendidikan nasional*” ‘Indonesian is mandatory to be used as the language of instruction in national education’. This is also in line with Liddicoat (cited in Delarue & De Caluwe, 2015), that such policies have the most impact on the members of society, socialized mainly by educators. The word *wajib* ‘mandatory’ in the law has a big impact in language attitudes, especially for these students. In other words, attitudes and motivation were strongly intertwined, and the findings of this study are in line with similar studies on language attitudes and motivation of the learner (see also Todor & Dégi, 2016). Besides, the role of educators has an impact on the attitudes, as alluded to previously: school, where the current study was conducted, indirectly taught certain attitudes toward both varieties, including pride of the language, importance, and motivation to improve the language they use. The role of educational institution in language attitudes also found in Rajah-Carrim (2007). Therefore, it is also understandable that students tended to have more positive attitude towards SI. It was also found that 87% of the respondents had positive attitudes towards the standard variety, in terms of importance, and 93% see that SI should be improved.

Despite the significant differences between SI and CJI, we found interesting findings in individual choices. In this study, it is understandable that SI had a special place, in terms of pride, importance, and the need of improvement. However, our study also found that more than half of the respondents had positive attitudes towards CJI. There 83% of the respondents were proud of using CJI (agree and strongly agree). We found that 67% considered that CJI is important (agree and strongly agree). Of 604 respondents 52,9% saw that CJI should be improved (agree and strongly agree).

As the main means of communication in daily activities, it is undoubted that CJI is perceived to have special status. Besides, as indicated by Oetomo (1990), and Sneddon (2006), CJI is the “language” of the middle-class, especially in Jakarta—the center of lifestyle. It is also “the standard” informal Indonesian and perceived as prestigious variety. Finding that these younger generations are proud of using CJI is in line with the status. Moreover, the status also the reason for the need for improvement.

Findings that students had positive attitudes towards CJI show the role of the variety in social life. Moreover, as it is alluded to previously, it was the first variety acquired by these Indonesian-speaking younger generations. They acquired values and norms in their

community as socialized through this variety. Therefore, it has an important role in the identity constructions.

The finding, which relates with identity, is in line with several studies across countries such as Rajah-Carrim (2007) who studied the role of Kreol as the first language in educational spheres, as well as Albirini (2014) who studied the role of colloquial varieties in the acquisition of the standard Arabic variety in educational context. This is also in line with the study of Azerbaijani younger generations in Tabriz by Nouri (2015) who found that Azerbaijani adolescents had positive attitudes toward the ethnic identity and language of Azerbaijani. Another study by Rubino (2015), found that young Italo-Australian immigrants who were more confident when speaking Italian, especially in their community. This study also in line with Tódor and Dégi (2016) in that students' attitudes were determined by their own experiences of language use which built upon specific emotional, affective, and cognitive factors, as well as communication.

This study examines language variation through adolescents' attitudes in educational context. Garrett (2010, p. 2) has put forward that "[...] language variation carries social meaning and so can bring very different attitudinal reactions, even social advantages and disadvantages." Further, Garrett also says that attitudes toward language, both positive and negative, are often affected by language standardization (Garrett, 2010), which is socialized, one of which is, through educational context. Such institution also plays an important role in adolescence, which is also reflected in this study.

As already discussed in the previous subsection, CJI was not prohibited at school. In contrast to findings from the previous studies (Subiyatningsih, 2017; Nuryani, 2019), this study shows that not using SI was "excusable" in the educational setting. Nonetheless, these students did have positive attitudes towards SI, in terms of pride, importance, and intention for improvement, while still regarding CJI positively, even though it tends to have less values in social function than its counterpart.

#### 4. CONCLUSION

This study examines attitudes towards two Indonesian varieties—Standard Indonesian and Colloquial Jakarta Indonesian—by students of junior and senior high schools who speak Jakarta Indonesian and live in Depok City, West Java. This study investigates three main points through a questionnaire: their pride in the varieties, their thought of the importance of the varieties, and their intention for the improvement of the varieties.

There is a strong indication that these students perceived Standard Indonesian positively in all conditions. In the educational setting, where formality is

favorable, the finding is not very surprising. It is also an impact of the language policy in Indonesia, where it is mandatory to use *Bahasa Indonesia* as the main medium of instruction. Meanwhile, it is found that students tended to have positive attitudes towards Colloquial Jakarta Indonesian, as well. The findings indicate that this informal variety has special status for the students.

Findings in this study confirms previous observation done by Sneddon (2003, 2006) that both varieties have their own social function. This study complements the views on the two varieties of the Indonesian, particularly in educational settings, and illustrates the language of younger generations of Indonesian who live in urban areas. It should be noted that this study was conducted in a restricted neighboring area of Jakarta. Similar studies in broader areas are to be conducted to have a bigger picture of Indonesian younger generations' language attitudes towards these varieties.

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#### LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADJ	adjective marker
Btw	Betawi
CJI	Colloquial Jakarta Indonesian
DEF	definite
Eng	English
Ind	Indonesian
PL	plural
SI	Standard Indonesian
Snd	Sundanese
TR	transitive marker

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