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Attitudes Toward Language and Language Choice in Regional Intermarriage Families: A Case Study in Tangerang, Banten

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Abstract

Despite extensive research on language attitudes and shifts in Indonesia, studies on language choice in intercultural marriages remain scarce. Therefore, this study explores the attitudes toward heritage, national and international languages, as well as factors influencing language choice in regional intermarriage families living in Tangerang, Banten. This research employed a qualitative case study and used a purposive sampling technique to select the respondents. The respondents were four mothers whose spouses come from different regional cultural backgrounds and live in the Tangerang area. Using questionnaires and semi-structured interviews, this study revealed positive attitudes toward heritage, national, and international languages among respondents, emphasizing the significance of regional languages as crucial elements in maintaining connections with their cultural roots and fostering a sense of self-awareness and appreciation of their cultural backgrounds. However, discrepancies emerge between the parents' beliefs and their actual efforts to maintain and preserve the heritage language for their children. Meanwhile, well-educated female parents perceive mastering English as essential in a globalized world. They prioritize English proficiency to provide educational opportunities for their children. This dual perspective on language reflects an attitude among the respondents that is sensitive to levels of formality and covers diverse purposes of language. On one hand, the desire to learn and use English to connect with the global community indicates an awareness of the importance of a global language for communication, education, and opportunities beyond their local context. On the

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other hand, their attachment to national and regional languages highlights a strong sense of cultural identity.

Keywords: Attitude toward languages, language choice, intermarriage families.

1. INTRODUCTION

Regional intermarriage families are commonplace in Indonesia, stemming from the country's rich diversity in cultures, languages, and tribal identities. Children from intermarriage families may acquire the language of either their mother, father, or in some cases, both. Clyne (2003, as cited in Kadir, 2021) argued that language shift is more prevalent among children born to mixed-marriage families than among those born within the same ethnolinguistic group. However, the dominant language may be influenced by the language with the highest societal status in their area (Ulfa, 2017). Current studies of bilingualism in the Indonesian context show that the use of *Indonesian* in mixed families is rising, especially among individuals with higher education levels. As educational attainment increases, individuals are more exposed to and frequently use the Indonesian language (Bonafix & Manara, 2016; Idaryani & Fidyati, 2023; Rahmadani, 2023; Sukamto et al., 2021). Alongside Indonesian as the national language and the local language, foreign languages, specifically English as an international language, are used in Indonesia. English serves various purposes across fields, such as politics, diplomacy, international trade, industry, commerce, education, popular culture, and many more (Bonafix & Manara, 2016). Family plays a significant role in both acquiring and preserving heritage languages and in contributing to language maintenance (Kadir, 2021). Some parents view their heritage language as a valuable asset that the younger generation could benefit from for academic progress, while others perceive it as closely tied to their ethnic identity, binding children to their cultural roots (Ulfa, 2017). Parental attitudes are key to heritage language maintenance, as parents are crucial for intergenerational transmission. Baker (1992, as cited in Rahman et al. 2021) stated that attitudes toward languages are characterized by three aspects: (1) the cognitive aspect, which deals with a person's beliefs, values, and thoughts concerning a language, (2) the emotional aspect, which addresses emotions and feelings toward a language, and (3) the behavioral aspect, which relates to actions in using particular language. Thus, personal attitudes and values are "strong forces that can influence language maintenance or language shift" (Michieka, 2012, as cited in Bonafix & Manara, 2016, pp. 84-85).

Previous studies of language maintenance and language shift examined how daily language usage either changes or remains constant, with a particular emphasis on understanding the dynamics of this relationship. Fishman (1965, as cited in Kadir, 2021) defined language maintenance and language shift as a longitudinal process resulting from cumulative language choices. Roostini and Manara (2021) argued that language shift can both lead to language investment and impact language heritage maintenance. Language choice in regional intermarriage families can contribute to either language shift or language maintenance. A study conducted by Bonafix and Manara (2016) identified a local language shift to Indonesian among participants from mixed-cultural family backgrounds, influenced by factors such as socioeconomic, education, frequency of contact, rural or urban area settings, and attitudes toward the language.

Despite extensive research on language attitudes and language shifts in regional intermarriage families in Indonesia, several gaps remain. While it is established that the dominant language in intermarriage families may be influenced by the language with the highest societal status, there is a lack of detailed examination of specific societal influences, such as media, government policies, and community norms that shape the practices of language use. Additionally, although differing parental attitudes toward heritage languages have been discussed, comparative studies across different regions and ethnic groups are needed to provide a richer understanding of these attitudes. Research on attitudes toward national and international languages, along with regional language maintenance within regional intermarriage families in Indonesia's multicultural and multilingual context, remains a challenge. Therefore, this small-

scale research intends to investigate attitudes toward languages and language choice in regional intermarriage families living in Tangerang, Banten, Indonesia. Specifically, this study seeks to answer the following questions:

1. What are the attitudes toward heritage, national, and international languages in intermarriage families in Tangerang, Banten?
2. What factors influence language choice in intermarriage families in Tangerang, Banten?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This section reviews the related literature on attitudes toward regional, national, and international languages, particularly within intermarriage families. The literature review covers key concepts, including language attitudes toward heritage language in the Indonesian context, language choices in intermarriage families, and factors influencing language choices.

2.1 Language Attitudes Toward Heritage Language in Indonesian Context

Attitudes toward languages refer to the emotions and beliefs that individuals hold regarding languages spoken by others or themselves (Rahman et al., 2021). According to Baker (1992, as cited in Rahman et al., 2021), attitudes toward languages involve three facets: cognitive, emotional, and behavioral. The cognitive dimension pertains to an individual's beliefs, values, and thoughts about a language, while the emotional aspect concerns their feelings and emotions toward it. Meanwhile, the behavioral component refers to their actions related to the language. These dimensions are interconnected, indicating that favorable beliefs about a language correspond with positive emotions and, consequently, positive linguistic behaviors. However, the strength of these three components may vary, with some individuals possessing a stronger cognitive attitude toward a language compared to their behavioral or emotional attitudes.

Heritage language, which refers to the language spoken at home with parents and other family members, is often perceived as an inherent trait or asset acquired through birth (Ros et al., 2021). Heritage languages are usually learned in settings where exposure is limited, and they are often used less than the dominant language during late childhood and adolescence. These languages differ structurally and change at all linguistic levels compared to standard grammar due to input, its amount, and the age of bilinguals (Montrul, 2023). Heritage speakers are often described as individuals who maintain "a cultural or familial connection" to their heritage language, even if their proficiency in the dominant language surpasses their heritage language (Polinsky, 2015, as cited in Roostini & Manara, 2021).

As heritage languages face challenges of language shift and endangerment, fostering positive attitudes, pride, and openness toward linguistic diversity within communities becomes increasingly imperative. According to Hur et al. (2021), studies of heritage language are intertwined with socio-cultural aspects, such as identities, attitudes, and motivations. Idaryani and Fidyati (2023) sought to understand the attitudes of Acehnese parents toward their heritage language, Acehnese language, and its impact on the intergenerational transmission of the language within families in two suburbs of Lhokseumawe City, Aceh Province, Indonesia. The study highlighted three key findings. First, parents with higher educational degrees exhibit negative attitudes toward their heritage language and low self-esteem in speaking it, leading to a gradual language shift among them. In contrast, parents with lower educational degrees feel more confident in speaking Acehnese and maintain a strong sense of belonging to their heritage language. Second, there is a gap between parents' declarations and their actual practices in using Acehnese at home, influenced by educational pressures and their negative attitudes. Third, the decline in home transmission of Acehnese puts the language at risk, resulting in lower proficiency among children.

Another study on attitudes toward heritage language was conducted by Yassi et al. (2021), who aimed to determine the language attitudes of the Konjonese-speaking community, a minority language group in Bulukamba Regency, South Sulawesi, Indonesia. It focused on three villages

in the Bonto Tiro sub-district: Batang, Bonto Bulaeng, and Tamanlanrea. This descriptive quantitative study examined two independent variables: age group (teenagers, adults, and the elderly) and educational background (less-educated and well-educated groups). Data were collected from 45 respondents through questionnaires, supplemented by field observations and interviews with village leaders, teachers, and religious figures. The study identified four key factors influencing language attitudes: high appreciation for their local language, pride in using it, open-mindedness, and modesty. The findings concluded that the Konjonese language is thriving and relatively safe from endangerment due to the community's positive attitude. Although there is a language shift toward increased use of the Indonesian language, it is not at an alarming level as the community's strong appreciation for their language, pride, openness, and modesty helps maintain Konjonese in their everyday domains, such as homes and neighborhoods. This results in stable bilingualism within the community.

Meanwhile, [Yuliana and Yanti \(2023\)](#) investigated the language attitudes, shift, and maintenance of Chinese Heritage Language (CHL), such as Hakka, Teochew, and Hokkien, among Jakartan Chinese Indonesians, along with the factors contributing to these phenomena. Using a mixed-method approach, the data were collected from 100 young respondents living in West Jakarta and North Jakarta. A combination of questionnaire-based language indexes and in-depth interviews were used for data collection. The results indicated that the majority of young Jakartan Chinese Indonesians have shifted to using Indonesian, with only 9% fully maintaining CHL within their families. English is used more frequently than CHL and often mixed with Indonesian. The study identified key factors contributing to language shift, including the domains and functionality of the language and family background. Specifically, factors such as parents' origin, their first language, their language attitude, language policies at home, language contact with the extended family, and the value the extended family places on CHL all influence language shift. The findings highlighted a concerning trend of CHL loss within the Jakartan Chinese community.

These studies enhance our understanding of the web of influences surrounding heritage languages, emphasizing the crucial role of socio-cultural factors in their maintenance or decline. Within the family context, parents are seen as the key agents in encouraging the preservation of a heritage language due to the frequent language interactions and acquisition processes that occur within the family unit ([Brown, 2011](#)). Moreover, parents are recognized as the ideal facilitators for instructing, transmitting, sustaining, and passing down the heritage language to their descendants. The exposure parents provide and the consistent practices they maintain about the language significantly influence their children's proficiency and attitudes toward it ([Brown, 2011](#); [Lekatompessy, 2021](#)).

2.2 Language Choice in Intermarriage Family

Intermarriage families contribute significantly to the development of languages, playing a key role in continuing linguistic traditions within communities. Children from such marriages often acquire multiple languages from their parents, thereby promoting linguistic variety within their families ([Seli & Kristi, 2020](#)). Language choice within intercultural marriages influences either the shift or the preservation of languages. In this context, language choice refers to the languages preferred by couples in mixed marriages within their household setting. [Kadir \(2021\)](#) argued that if a parent speaks a minority language and the other speaks the dominant language, it is more likely that the parent speaking the minority language will not pass it on to the children. In this study, heritage language is considered the minority language, while Indonesian is regarded as the majority language.

Several studies have highlighted the family's role in preserving minority languages and the effect of mixed marriages on language shift, especially in the Indonesian context. [Seli and Kristi \(2020\)](#) investigated language choice, language attitudes, and factors determining language preference in intermarriage Sumatran-Javanese communities in Lubuklinggau, South Sumatera. This sociolinguistic research employed a descriptive qualitative method and involved 100 participants selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through interviews and

questionnaires. The results showed that the Palembang Malay Lubuklinggau dialect had the highest number of speakers in family and friendship domains, while Indonesian was predominantly used in formal domains, such as religion, education, employment, and public settings. The language attitudes of the research participants were generally negative, as evidenced by their lack of pride, awareness, and loyalty toward their parents' languages, resulting in minimal efforts to maintain these languages. Sari (2020) examined the language choices of Dyak-Madurese couples in interethnic marriages and the factors influencing these choices. A descriptive qualitative research method was employed, selecting three Dyak-Madurese interethnic families as participants. Based on observation and interviews, the results showed that Dyak-Madurese interethnic families predominantly used Indonesian as their first language and for daily interactions at home. Notably, in one family, a child preferred using the Madurese language with his father while also using Indonesian with both parents. In other domains, such as interactions with neighbors and friends, Indonesian was commonly used. The study found that children from the first and second families could not speak their ethnic languages, leading to younger children not being taught these languages. However, the child from the third family could speak Madurese because his father actively taught it to him. Three factors were identified as influencing language choice in Dyak-Madurese interethnic marriages: the participants, the social context, and the function of the language. The research concluded that Dyak-Madurese interethnic families generally exhibit a negative attitude toward their ethnic languages, except the father in the third family, who displayed a positive attitude.

Meanwhile, Aziz et al. (2016) investigated why Acehnese intermarriage couples choose Indonesian as their primary language for home communication and explored the impact of this choice on the preservation of their native languages. Conducted in Banda Aceh, this qualitative study involved interviews and questionnaires with five Acehnese intermarriage couples who use the Indonesian language at home. The interviews revealed several reasons for this preference: (1) accommodating their spouse, (2) convenience, (3) expanding their social network, (4) Indonesian language being the community language, (5) its status as the national language, (6) its role as the medium of instruction, (7) its dominance, (8) its neutrality, and (9) a lack of motivation to use indigenous languages. The questionnaires further indicated that this language choice could lead to "linguistic suicide", where parents do not transmit their native languages to their children. Consequently, children may adopt Indonesian as their first language, potentially losing the ability to speak their parents' mother tongues.

These studies provide evidence that intermarriage families contribute to linguistic diversity, as children often learn multiple languages from their parents. However, in Indonesian intermarriage contexts, the dominant language (Indonesian) often replaces minority languages, especially in formal and public domains. The predominant use of the Indonesian language in intermarriage families may lead to the loss of heritage languages among younger generations, as children adopt Indonesian as their first language. There is generally a negative attitude toward maintaining heritage languages, leading to a decline in their use and transmission to children. The preference for the Indonesian language is influenced by factors such as convenience, social integration, national language status, and a lack of motivation to use heritage languages.

2.3 Factors Influencing Language Choice

Reports indicate that language choice among different types of speakers within social interactions is determined by numerous factors. A study by Kadir (2021) investigated the factors contributing to language choice among Indonesian women married to Canadian spouses and living in Canada. The analysis revealed several factors: (1) addressee: the primary determinant of language choice, as it depends on the interlocutors, (2) situation, social context, and duration of living overseas, these influence the choice of language in daily interactions, (3) topic: in multilingual settings, a topic acts as a regulator of language choice, where changing topics may trigger a switch to another language, (4) intrinsic and extrinsic motivation: personal and external factors affect language preference, (5) language proficiency and skills of the parents: the ability to use a particular language plays a significant role, and (6) children's own language preference:

the linguistic choices of children also influence family language dynamics. [Fasya and Sari \(2021\)](#) examined the sociocultural factors affecting language choice in the Tanjung Market speech community, Sumedang Regency. The study employed a sociolinguistic theoretical framework and involved one hundred participants speaking Sundanese, Javanese, and Indonesian languages. Five sociocultural factors influencing language choice were identified: (1) speech participants, including the speakers, their interlocutors, and third-party participants, (2) speech situation: the context in which the interaction takes place, (3) speech purpose, including representative speech and directive speech, (4) subject matter, or the topic of conversation, and (5) speech norms: cultural norms and expectations within the community.

Similarly, [Ulfah and Yoshino \(2023\)](#) revealed several factors influencing language choice in Indonesian-Japanese intermarriage families, which included the place of residence, the language proficiency of both spouses, their motivation and enthusiasm for transmitting the Indonesian wife's native language to their children, support from the Japanese family, awareness of language education for children, attitudes toward language, psychological factors, and child development. A study to investigate how language choice is manifested and the factors of determining language choice within inter-ethnic and intra-ethnic relationships in the Chinese community in Medan was conducted by [Nasution and Ayuningtias \(2020\)](#). The findings revealed that language choice within the family and occupation domains, particularly in inter-ethnic relationships, is predominantly characterized by the use of vernacular language, specifically Hokkien. However, when it comes to intra-ethnic relationships, the Indonesian language is the main language to communicate. The study also identified cultural similarity as the dominant factor influencing language choice among Chinese participants.

Language choice is shaped not only by linguistic factors but also by external factors. It is closely tied to the social context of the speakers' community. Factors such as interlocutors, topic, situation, purpose, time, and place can impact an individual's language choice. Furthermore, a specific situation in which a conversation occurs also plays a crucial role in determining language choice.

3. METHODS

3.1 Research Design

This research employed a qualitative case study approach to explore the language attitudes of female parents from intermarriage families and the factors influencing their language choices ([Creswell & Creswell, 2018](#)). The study used purposive sampling to select the respondents. This technique, commonly used in qualitative research, is considered the most practical and effective strategy for identifying and selecting participants, particularly in contexts with limited resources ([Patton, 2015](#)).

3.2 Research Participants

The participants were mothers whose spouses come from different regional cultural backgrounds and live in the Tangerang area. Participants were recruited using a purposive sampling technique: (1) specific criteria for participant selection were clearly defined: the target participants were mothers whose spouses have different regional cultural backgrounds and who reside in the Tangerang area, (2) personal contacts were utilized, including reaching out to friends, family, and acquaintances living in the Tangerang area, (3) an initial screening was conducted through brief interviews to ensure that potential participants met all the required criteria, and (4) the mothers were selected to represent the diversity and specific criteria needed for the study. These participants were then formally invited and willingly expressed their interest in participating in the study. The participants were guaranteed anonymity through the use of pseudonyms. Table 1 presents background information on the participants.

Table 1. Background information of respondents.

Background information	Respondents (Pseudonyms)			
	R1	R2	R3	R4
Age	39	40	57	39
Respondent's regional background	Javanese-Chinese	Sundanese	Javanese	Sundanese
Husbands' regional background	Batakese	Ambonese	Sundanese	Javanese
Respondent's occupation	Employee	Employee	Teacher	English lecturer
Respondent's level of education	S1	S1	S2	S2
Child(ren)'s age	6 (daughter)	10 (son)	22 (daughter)	11 (daughter)
			24 (daughter)	8 (son)

3.3 Data Collection Techniques

This research employed questionnaires and a semi-structured interview in the Indonesian language. A total of 33 closed statements in questionnaires were compiled and adapted from Roostini and Manara (2021) and Qiu and Qiu (2022), while the semi-structured interview questions were adapted from Romanowski (2021). The questionnaire comprised six sections: (a) demographic information, (b) attitudes toward heritage language, (c) attitudes toward Indonesian language, (d) attitudes toward English, (e) the scope of heritage language use, (f) the scope of Indonesian language use, and (g) scope of English use. Semi-structured interviews comprised 17 questions and lasted approximately 20-30 minutes each, with participants granting permission for the interviews to be audio-recorded. The distribution of the questionnaires and semi-structured interviews took place after the participants signed a consent letter provided by the researchers, indicating their voluntary participation in the research. Following the interviews, the recordings were transcribed, and the respondents were assigned codes: R1, R2, R3, and R4. The collected data consisted of questionnaire responses and transcription of the interviews' recordings, which were used as supporting evidence for qualitative analysis. This approach clarified, confirmed, and further explored the insights obtained from the questionnaires.

3.4 Data Analysis

Thematic analysis was applied to analyze data collected from questionnaires and semi-structured interviews. The analysis began with a thorough review of the questionnaire responses and interview transcripts to identify emerging themes. Next, the data were coded by systematically classifying keywords or concepts based on three dimensions of attitudes toward languages proposed by Baker (1992, as cited in Rahman et al., 2021): the cognitive aspect (person's beliefs, values, and thoughts), the emotional aspect (emotions and feelings), and the behavioral aspect (action and practice). Subsequently, descriptive narratives were developed for each theme, incorporating quotations or extracts from the data to illustrate key points and provide context and interpretation to help readers understand the significance of each emerging theme. Finally, the implications of the findings were discussed along with their contribution to the existing literature.

4. FINDINGS

In this section, the findings were presented in two primary parts based on the research questions stated in the introduction section. The first section triangulated the demographic survey and interview data, mapped the participants' attitudes toward heritage, national, and international languages in intermarriage families, and explored their personal perspectives on living in multilingual environments. The second section delved deeper into their descriptive accounts of these multilingual realities and the factors influencing language choices in intermarriage families, as narrated during the interview sessions.

4.1 Attitudes toward Heritage, National, and International Languages in Intermarriage Families

Based on the questionnaires, participants predominantly “agree” with the conception that heritage language is important for the younger generation as cultural as a cultural marker of linguistic identity and pride. However, when it comes to the real practices at home, the results are mixed, as shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Attitudes toward heritage language.

Statements		Likert scale			
		Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Belief	a) In the era of globalization, it is important for the younger generation to learn their regional language.	1	3		
Value	b) It is important for me to maintain my cultural identity.		4		
	c) For me, regional languages are important as a part of my identity.		4		
Opinion	d) For me, it is important to pass on regional languages to my descendants.		4		
	e) Regional languages need to be taught at home.	1	3		
	f) Regional languages need to be taught at schools.	1	3		
Feeling	g) I am proud to be able to speak a regional language.		4		
Practice		Always	Often	Sometime s	Rarely
	h) I use a regional language at home.		1	3	
	i) I use a regional language in my neighborhood.		2	2	
	j) I use a regional language at work.		2	2	
	k) I use a regional language when meeting family members from the same ethnic group.		4		
	l) I use a regional language when meeting people from the same ethnic group.		4		

Table 2 shows that respondents agreed that regional language is important as a marker of their identity. They also viewed that regional language should, therefore, be preserved, maintained, and passed down to younger generations. Participants strongly felt the responsibility to transmit regional languages to the next generation, emphasizing their importance both at home and in schools. During the interview sessions, all participants acknowledged that regional language serves as an index to and badge of their family’s linguistic and cultural identity. They expressed the sentimental value and emotional connection tied to their family’s identity and pride. The participants recognized the ideal importance of passing down regional languages, as shown in (1).

- (1) Well, ideally speaking, it should be passed down to the next generation. However since it was a mixed cultural marriage and living in a heterogeneous environment like here, it is a challenge. (R1)
- (2) My husband, once in a while, would use Sundanese. When my child was still very young, he would sing a lullaby in Sundanese or play some traditional songs. (R3)

However, in practice, regional languages are mostly used when interacting within their own linguistic community, with less frequent use at home. The participants later explained during the interview sessions that they do not have a formal agreement in their family to use regional languages strictly at home. Most of the participants come from multicultural family backgrounds (R1 and R2) or were born outside of their linguistic regions (R1, R2, and R4). Three participants (R1, R2, R3) reported being passive users of their regional languages due to mobility and little contact with the speech community. Despite the limited use of regional languages with their

children, efforts have been made to introduce the language and culture through indirect use of the language through cultural products, traditional songs, customs, and events, as demonstrated in(2).

Table 3. Attitudes toward national language.

Statements		Likert Scale			
		Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Belief	a) In the era of globalization, it is crucial for the younger generation to speak Indonesian.	2	2		
Value	b) It is important for me to maintain my national identity.	2	2		
	c) For me, the Indonesian language is important as part of my identity.	2	2		
Opinion	d) For me, it is important to pass on the Indonesian language to my descendants.	2	2		
	e) Indonesian needs to be taught and used at home.	2	2		
	f) Indonesian needs to be taught at schools.	2	2		
Feeling	g) I am proud of the Indonesian language.	2	2		
Practice		Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely
	h) I use Indonesian at home.	2	2		
	i) I use Indonesian in my neighborhood.	1	3		
	j) I use Indonesian at work.		4		
	k) I use Indonesian when meeting family members from the same ethnic group.		3	1	
	l) I use Indonesian when meeting people from the same ethnic group.		4		
	m) I use Indonesian at cultural events such as weddings, traditions, and others.		4		

Table 3 exhibits the participants' attitudes toward the national language. They view the national language, Indonesian, as having essential functions, serving both as the nation's official language and as a lingua franca. As such, participants emphasized the importance of ensuring their children acquire the Indonesian language to actively participate as citizens in the country. The participants reported that they often use the Indonesian language with their children at home across all communicative events in their lives while remaining open to the use of mixed languages in their household. However, during the interviews, participants strongly emphasized that the Indonesian language has to be acquired first before introducing their children to other foreign languages. According to these parents, exposing children to two languages at the same time during their development years could hinder their full acquisition of both. In this context, multilingual development is still perceived through a monolingual perspective that compartmentalizes the two linguistic capacities in two isolated storages. This monolingual perspective of bilingualism is explicitly articulated by R4 in (3):

- (3) So, my husband and I decided to use the Indonesian language with our children until they achieve a good level of understanding before we introduce them to other languages. It is because we do not want them to get confused with the two languages. Well, like, in most cases, some children have to go to speech therapy because of that. Some of them perhaps live with their grandparents who use the local language, and when they are with their parents, they change to the Indonesian language. Eventually, they mix up the languages. (R4)

Table 4. Attitudes toward English as the international language.

Statements		Likert Scale			
		Strongly agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Belief	a) In the era of globalization, it is important for the younger generation to speak English.	3	1		
Value	b) It is important for me to learn English as an International language.	4			
	c) For me, English is important as part of the global world.	4			

Table 4 continued...

Opinion	d) For me, it is important to pass on English to my descendants.	3	1		
	f) English needs to be taught and used at home.	3	1		
	g) English needs to be taught in schools.	3	1		
Feeling	h) I can speak English.	4			
Practice		Always	Often	Sometimes	Rarely
	i) I use English at home.				
	j) I use English in my neighborhood.				4
	k) I use English at work.	1	3		
	l) I use English when meeting extended family.		1	3	
	m) I use English when meeting people from other countries.	1	3		
	n) I use English at cultural events like coworkers' weddings or office/university events.		3	1	

Attitudes toward English as the international language are reflected in Table 4. The respondents strongly agreed that younger generations should learn and be able to communicate in English. They viewed mastering English as participation in a globalized world. Respondents acknowledged that English should be taught at home and in schools. This positive attitude toward English likely stems from their current use of the language in their professional and social lives (as indicated by items 'k', 'm', and 'n'). During the interview sessions, all participants consistently emphasized English as a language of education, professional aspiration, and global participation, as depicted in (4). They also expressed that foreign language acquisition should extend beyond English, advocating for additional multilingualism (see (5)):

- (4) As a parent, I see English as the language of education. It has a pedagogical function to further their [my children's] education, and social interaction in today's era. I think, at the moment, it [English] is important for further education if it is not being replaced by the Chinese language soon since right now, English is still the dominant international language. (R4)
- (5) In the near future, when my son wants to study another foreign language, it will be his choice whether he wants to study Arabic, Mandarin, or Korean. I will let him decide. (R2)

In summary, the participants viewed regional languages, Indonesian, and English (as well as other foreign languages) as equally important but with different communicative functions. However, their understanding of multilingualism is still heavily influenced by the traditional monolingual perspective that treats multilingual learning as the isolated acquisition of individual languages. Despite this, further insights from the interview sessions revealed that participants cannot strictly compartmentalize their use of languages in their multilingual communicative events.

4.2 Factors Influencing Language Choice in Intermarriage Families

Through the semi-structured interviews, it was discovered that the four female respondents speak more than one language: a local language, Indonesian, and English. In terms of language proficiency, three respondents considered themselves proficient in Indonesian and English, while one respondent was proficient in heritage, national, and international languages. Deducted from the interview, the analysis revealed that factors such as social situations, common language proficiency, language preferences of children, topics, and function of interaction influence language choices in intermarriage families.

4.2.1 Familial and social situation

In intermarriage families, language use is influenced by social context. Within the households of all respondents, different social situations, such as family gatherings, community

events, or cultural celebrations, prompt the choice of certain languages. When interacting with visitors or people from the same ethnic group, they tend to switch to regional languages, as indicated by the following interview excerpts.

- (6) When we have family gatherings from Sumedang, for example for wedding events, we automatically speak Sundanese at home. (R2)
- (7) During religious events, for example, family gatherings for worship, prayers, or singing, we use the Batak language. (R1)
- (8) When I meet cousins from Indramayu in the village, we use the local language. But, when we meet in the city, we use Indonesian. (R3)

In (6) and (7), R2 and R1 highlighted the situational and contextual aspects of regional language practices. Local languages, such as Sundanese and Bataknese, play a central role in some events like weddings and religious ceremonies, where families from particular regions come together. These occasions emphasize the connection between language and culture, nurturing an environment where people can fully engage and connect on the occasions. Meanwhile, in (8), R3's statement underscores the place as a factor influencing language choice. In urban areas like cities with greater linguistic diversity, using Indonesian is viewed as a neutral and inclusive choice, while in the village setting, the local language serves as a bridge to the local culture and village community. This aligns with the findings of [Kadir \(2021\)](#) and [Romanowski \(2021\)](#), which emphasized that social context significantly shapes heritage language practices. Through these social functions, the participants informally expose their children to regional languages, hoping that their children will at least passively understand both verbal (i.e. vocabulary, accent, utterances) and non-verbal aspects (norms, customs, and cultural practice) of the regional languages.

4.2.2 *Common language proficiency*

Common language proficiency refers to the shared level of language skills among individuals. It implies that they possess a similar or comparable ability to understand and speak in a particular language to ensure mutual understanding. Common language proficiency often ties in with cultural identity and reflects a shared cultural background as well as heritage, fostering a sense of belonging and unity among individuals.

- (9) The household helper is Javanese, and I tend to speak Javanese with her. My daughter often hears me speaking Javanese at home. (R1)
- (10) Local language is useful when we're on vacation, for example when negotiating prices. We usually get a better deal because the sellers respect it when we can speak the same language as them. (R3)

From (9) and (10), it is evident that the respondents' language choices are often determined by their interlocutors. They seek a common language to reduce language barriers that can hinder various aspects of interaction. Sharing a common language with others allows individuals to navigate social, professional, and personal environments more smoothly. It also facilitates adaptability to various situations, such as travel, business, or social interactions. [Romanowski \(2021\)](#) stressed that the chosen communication set up in a household could lead to a child's development of passive bilingualism in the future, underscoring the long-term impact of these linguistic decisions.

4.2.3 *Children's language preference*

The respondents, who are well-educated female parents, mentioned that they choose a language that allows for effective communication with their children, aligns with their educational needs, and helps them integrate into the community. Children's preferences for using regional

languages, Indonesian, and English at home and in school are intertwined with their parents' interactional behavior. Children naturally adopt the language(s) spoken around them, primarily from their parents and peers.

- (11) I often engage in conversations with my son using English. He enjoys watching English-language content on YouTube, so I ask questions and talk to him in English. (R2)
- (12) My husband, for example, often automatically says something in Sundanese so my daughter is exposed to Javanese and Sundanese quite often. As for the Batakese language, she gets Batakese exposure when we have our routine family gatherings. My husband would use Batakese all the time. I mean from delivering a prayer to singing karaoke... So, my child would ask what those words mean and she gradually gets the basic knowledge of the language. (R1)

From (11), we can infer that R2 fosters her son's interest in English by engaging in conversations and leveraging his exposure to English-language content on YouTube, creating an immersive learning environment for him. By asking questions and maintaining conversations about English content on social media, the child gains exposure to various accents, colloquial expressions, and diverse vocabulary. Meanwhile, (12) displays multilingual realities in which code-switching and code-mixing occur naturally and automatically in multilingual communicative interactions. It also depicts how children acquire multilingual capacities through indirect exposure to speech community activities. This approach, adopted by all participants, reflects subconscious efforts to introduce their children to regional languages that spark their curiosity and encourage them to learn more, as shown in (13).

- (13) When he is with his grandmother, he uses Sundanese. With us, his parents, he uses Indonesian and English. When we went to the wedding events of my mother's family, we used Sundanese although they speak Indonesian with him Indonesian with Sundanese touch, so code-mixing. When we went to the wedding events of my husband's family, he was exposed to Ambonese Indonesian. He enjoyed it... He is really proud to be multicultural. He often told his friends that he has grandparents from Central Java, Western Java, and Ambon. Once, there was a school event, and he asked me, "Mom, which traditional clothes should I wear? I have so many choices, Sunda, Java, and Ambon". (R2)

This incidental curiosity grants children access to multiple social and cultural memberships within their familial and social environments. Their exposure to diverse linguistic and cultural knowledge affords children a more dynamic enactment of multilingual and multicultural identities.

5. DISCUSSION

The findings from the first research question indicate positive attitudes toward heritage, national, and international languages. The respondents viewed the heritage language as an integral part of their identity, heritage, and traditions. Regional languages are seen as a significant element in maintaining a connection to cultural roots, fostering a sense of self-awareness and appreciation for their cultural background. In regional intermarriage families, proficiency in the heritage language enables effective communication with grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins, and other extended family relatives who may only be able to speak the local language. Heritage languages are viewed as valuable assets that contribute to the overall richness of cultural diversity. The use of heritage languages in a regional intermarriage context allows the family to appreciate linguistic and cultural diversity. Proficiency in the heritage language provides individuals with linguistic and cultural skills that are valuable in diverse environments, allowing the enactment of their multilingual and multicultural identities. Children growing up with exposure to multiple languages, including their heritage languages, may develop enhanced cognitive (Clyne, 2003, as cited in [Kadir, 2021](#)) and intercultural skills. Although the respondents acknowledged the significance of speaking the regional language within the family and agreed that home is an ideal setting for children to learn their heritage language, differences emerged between the parents'

beliefs and their actual efforts to promote and preserve it. In practice, regional languages are cherished more in celebratory contexts, functioning as markers of linguistic and cultural pride. While the participants communicated very little in their regional language with their children, there were subconscious efforts to expose their children to linguistic and cultural knowledge through cultural products and incidental cultural events from their speech communities. These findings align with previous studies on attitudes toward heritage languages (Idaryani & Fidyati, 2023; Romanowski, 2021; Zhu et al., 2020). Despite their positive attitudes, parents were hesitant to use the heritage language as the primary language with their children, fearing it might create communication barriers. The results show similarities to the research findings of Kadir (2021), in which heritage language loss has already begun among the first generation of Indonesian regional intermarriage families.

In terms of attitudes toward Indonesian as the national language, the respondents viewed it as the official language and a symbol of national identity. Indonesian connects people across diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds. In regional intermarriage families, where members often come from different linguistic backgrounds, Indonesian serves as a common language for effective communication. Moreover, Indonesian is used as the medium of instruction in schools and the language official of documents and government administration. This supports Bonafix and Manara's (2016) argument that the rapid advancement of Indonesian as the national language has impacted the status of local languages in Indonesia. Furthermore, Paauw (2009) further highlighted that the widespread adoption of Indonesian as the instructional language from primary school to university across the entire nation has profoundly influenced its evolution. Educational pressure and the predominant role of the Indonesian language as the instructional medium across all educational tiers has pushed parents, especially in metropolitan and suburban areas, toward pragmatic choices. Parents choose to communicate in Indonesian as the dominant and official language as it serves fundamental, educational, social, and institutional functions in their immediate communicative settings.

Meanwhile, for well-educated female parents participating in this study, English holds various significant values. From their perspectives, English can facilitate communication across countries, thus encouraging them to prioritize English proficiency to expand educational opportunities for their children. In many professional fields, English proficiency is considered a valuable skill. Parents recognize its importance for their children's future careers. This confirms Bonafix and Manara's (2016) findings that, even though English does not have official status in Indonesia, its influence is strongly felt, particularly with the increasing presence of transnational companies in major cities. Well-educated parents expose their children to English-language literature, films, songs, and other cultural products, viewing English as crucial for their children to navigate technology, social media, and the digital world. Interestingly, these parents do not restrict their children to learning only English as a foreign language. They believed that children should learn additional languages as well, leading to additive multilingualism.

The findings for the second research question revealed that language choice in intermarriage families is influenced by several factors, such as social situations, shared language proficiency, language preferences of children, topics, and function of interaction. Couples in intermarriage families choose different languages depending on the context and the linguistic preferences of their interlocutors. They use Indonesian in which both individuals can express themselves effectively. Parents also select languages that facilitate effective communication with their children and align with their educational needs. As multilingual speakers, the respondents encourage the multilingual and multicultural capacities of their children. This supports Kadir's (2021) study, which found that speakers adjust their speech to foster more interaction and reduce misunderstandings with interlocutors. Additionally, their bilingual abilities enable them to transition smoothly between languages when conversing with interlocutors from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. This multilingual capacity enables their children to participate in various speech communities and provides them with the resources to develop more evolving multilingual and multicultural identities.

6. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study highlighted positive attitudes toward heritage, national, and international languages among respondents, emphasizing the significance of regional languages in preserving cultural identity and facilitating communication with extended families. Proficiency in heritage languages was viewed as a valuable asset contributing to cultural richness. However, despite acknowledging the importance of regional languages, parents faced challenges in promoting them due to educational pressures and the dominance of Indonesian as the instructional medium. There was a noticeable gap between parents' beliefs and their actual efforts to maintain the regional language with their children.

Regarding Indonesian as the national language, respondents recognized it as a symbol of national identity and a common language in intermarriage families with diverse linguistic backgrounds. Meanwhile, English held significant value for well-educated parents, enabling communication across countries and offering valuable skills for future career prospects. Despite English not having official status in Indonesia, its influence was strongly felt. Respondents exhibited a dual perspective on language, reflecting diverse attitudes. On one hand, they demonstrated a willingness to learn and utilize English for global connectivity, recognizing its significance for communication, education, and opportunities beyond their local environment. On the other hand, their use of national and regional languages highlighted a strong sense of cultural identity.

Language choice in intermarriage families was influenced by several factors, such as social situations, common language proficiency, children's preferences, and the context of interaction. Couples adapted their language choices based on these factors, using Indonesian for personal expressions, English for professional topics, and regional languages within a familial context. This indicated a loss of heritage language among the first generation of regional intermarriage families. Overall, the study presented the various facets of language attitudes, choices, and challenges within the context of intermarriage families in Indonesia.

The pedagogical implications of this study involve recognizing and embracing linguistic diversity, promoting positive language attitudes, implementing effective language maintenance strategies, and adapting teaching methods to the unique linguistic contexts of regional intermarriage families. The small sample size of this study may limit the generalizability of the findings. However, further research on attitudes toward languages and language maintenance in regional intermarriage families could explore different scopes, such as longitudinal studies to observe how language attitudes evolve within families, or comparative analyses examining language attitudes and maintenance practices in regional intermarriage versus same-regional marriage families.

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