

Rék kamana manéh euy?
Sundanese language survival among Indonesian diaspora in Melbourne, Australia
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Abstract

This study explores the survival of Sundanese language among a small group of Indonesians of West Java origin living permanently in Australia. The majority of today's Melbourne-based Sundanese Indonesians migrated to Australia in 1950s, most of whom were Colombo plan scholars and a few other unskilled labour migrants (Museum Victoria, 2015). Beginning 1980s, more skilled Indonesian migrants came to Australia for studying, and then working in various professional areas. Their second generation children were mostly born in Australia and may have been deprived of the practice of neither Indonesian nor Sundanese language.

Most parents of migrant families worldwide, including those in Australia, are concerned with the maintenance of their ethnic identity (Phinney, 1990; Clyne, 2005; Ndhlovu, 2010; Mu, 2014) to show belonging to the country of origin and provide family harmony (Barett, 2008; Norton, 2008; Guardado & Becker, 2014). Not only can ethnic language be a cultural but also religious identity (Joseph, 2004). In the Australian context, the ethnic language may include national languages such as Chinese, Indian, Italian, German, Sudanese, or a local ethnic language like Sundanese. Belief in the importance of ethnic identity maintenance practices for family harmony is also shared by a few Sundanese parents whom this study focuses on, which include speaking ethnic language, visiting home country, wearing traditional clothes, and learning how to make ethnic foods (Moua & Lambourn, 2010). Unlike Indonesian, Sundanese language, has levels of politeness, depending on the people spoken to, shown by vocabulary choice (Lezer, 1931 as cited in Wessing, 1974).

Seven parents (four males and three females) of different families participated in the study. Three are Sundanese-Sundanese couples, another two couples are Sundanese-Jakartan, and the other two are Sundanese-Australian. Data of semi-structured interviews and home observations for about one month were generated to explore how parents of Sundanese origin maintain Sundanese language practices among their Australian-born second generation. Interview questions include demography, practices and reasons for this ethnic language maintenance. Meanwhile, observations focus on cultural artefacts (decorations, furniture, food, clothes, and music instrument) that the participants may have at their homes to maintain the Sundanese language and culture. These data were then analysed using theories of language and cultural representation, ethnicity and belonging, and language as religious identity.

Findings suggest that, despite believing in the importance of Sundanese culture in their diasporic life, speaking the Sundanese language, besides Indonesian and English, is the only practice that most of the participating parents, especially the Sundanese couples, can do to maintain their

identity, to show belonging to the ethnic group (Phinney, 1990; Clyne, 2005; Ndhlovu, 2010; Mu, 2014) and maintain family harmony (Barett, 2008; Norton, 2008; Guardado & Becker, 2014). However, limited use of speaking makes this ethnic language hardly survive that the young people only understand a few routine words of parental advice and basic instructions like '*Rek kamana maneh euy?*' (Where are you going, buddy?), but respond in English. To parents' surprise, one young person parroted back this expression which is considered impolite to utter to elderly people like parents. Other cultural identity maintenance practices include sending the young people to study or have regular family holiday in West Java and displaying some Sundanese cultural artefacts at home. Finally, the study suggests that parents need to be more creative and accommodative in socializing the Sundanese language to nurture their children's interests.

Key words: Sundanese language, Indonesian diaspora, language survival, parental advice

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