

## **SUNDANESE LANGUAGE SURVIVAL AMONG INDONESIAN DIASPORA FAMILIES IN MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA**

**Ahmad Bukhori Muslim**  
Indonesia University of Education  
abukhupi@gmail.com

### **Abstract**

Most migrant families living anywhere in the world, are concerned with maintaining their ethnic language, in order to sustain a sense of belonging to the country of their origin and enable extended family harmony. This study explores the survival of Sundanese language among eight Indonesian families of West Java origin (Sundanese speakers) living permanently in Melbourne, Australia. Most of these families migrated to Australia in the 1950s as Colombo Plan scholars and unskilled labourers. Semi-structured interviews and home observations showed that, despite believing in the importance of Sundanese language in their diasporic life, speaking Sundanese is the only practice that most of the participating parents, can do to maintain their language, alongside Bahasa Indonesia and English, to show they belong to the Sundanese culture. However, Sundanese language levels of politeness limit its use among their Australia-born second generation, making this ethnic language unlikely to survive. The young people only understand and copy a few routine words of greetings and short instructions. The study also suggests that the parents needed to be accommodative in order to maintain the Sundanese language by combining it with English and Bahasa Indonesia.

**Key words:** Sundanese language maintenance, Indonesian diaspora, parental advice and values

### **INTRODUCTION**

Historically most Sundanese people have lived in the Western part of Java Island, long before the independence of Indonesia. They share the western part of this small but highly densely populated island, which is also the hub of Indonesia, with other local ethnic groups such as the Javanese, Madurese, Balinese, and Malay. In the cities of West Java province, most Sundanese speak Sundanese language in their daily activities at home, schools, government offices, and they therefore may identify themselves more to being Sundanese than to being Indonesian. In most cases, Sundanese people and other local Indonesian ethnicities usually identify themselves to being Indonesian more strongly only when they are overseas. They want to show their Indonesian heritage when living in other countries such as the United States or Australia as experienced by the participating Sundanese families in this study.

Like other local ethnic groups of Indonesia, a lot of Sundanese people migrate to various overseas countries, including Australia. The history of modern migration of the Indonesian diaspora to Australia started in the 1950s, including current the Sundanese people who came to Melbourne as early as Colombo Plan scholars (Museum Victoria, 2015). Having lived in Melbourne permanently for decades, they still strongly consider themselves Sundanese-Indonesian who do not want to lose their cultural identity. They have strong motivation to communicate and socialize this cultural identity, particularly in their ethnic language, to their younger generation who are mostly were born in Australian.

Geographically a close neighbouring country to Australia, Indonesia is most often considered 'psychologically far'. Most Australians have unfortunately limited knowledge about Indonesia, other than Bali.

Due to their larger numbers, migrants from countries much further away than Indonesia such as Vietnam, India, China, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka and even Bosnia are more well-known among Australians than Indonesians. Evidence of this limited knowledge or engagement is provision of Australian public services in languages other than English, including various ethnic languages such as Arabic, Thai, Chinese, Vietnamese, Indian, German, Greek, and Swahili. Very rarely does this public service include Bahasa Indonesia, the national language of Australia's closest neighbour.

Overcoming the psychological barrier requires promotion of the Indonesian language and culture to the public of Australia. Due to limited Indonesian government promotion of Indonesia overseas, the engagement of Indonesian communities in Australia can effectively take the lead. Often times, people to people diplomacy has stronger effect than that of government to government. This initiative for cultural promotion has been taken by some Indonesian communities in Melbourne, Australia, including Sundanese people who have concern for promoting Indonesian language and culture, particularly that of Sundanese. They have established an organization called Paguyuban Pasundan (The Association of Sundanese) in Melbourne and organize various Sundanese cultural activities like Kabayan and Angklung (Bamboo-made traditional Sundanese music instrument) performances.

At the family level, these diasporic Sundanese people, particularly among the couples who are both of Sundanese origin, Sundanese language is used when communicating with their children as they want to maintain their local ethnic language. They believe that this ethnic language is an effective medium to communicate family values of respect and giving of parental advice that they want to pass down to the younger generation to maintain family harmony. Unfortunately, most of their children were

born and grew up in Australia, and their children's extensive exposure to English impedes maintenance. Despite the negative response of their children, some parents keep using the language in their daily routines. This effort is not always as successful as they expect. This issue of Sundanese language maintenance and what it means for the participating families is the main topic of this study.

This research centres on two questions. Firstly, 'how is Sundanese language used among Indonesian diaspora families of West Java origin?' Secondly, 'what does this use, if any, mean for their linguistic and cultural identification with Indonesia?' These two questions have been researched through semi-structured interviews and observations in homes and at cultural events over a five year period.

## **METHOD**

This research is a qualitative ethnographic case study. Eight families, represented by four fathers and four mothers, took part in the study. Most of them are Australian permanent residents who hold Indonesian passports, living in the Greater Melbourne area. Only one participant, married to an Australian, has taken Australian citizenship. Six of the parents are Sundanese couples, another couple are Indonesian but non-Sundanese, and the other has an Australian husband. Most of the participating parents come from Bandung, the capital city of West Java. A few of them are from other cities in the province such as Bogor, Tasikmalaya and Sukabumi.

The participants' length of stay in Australia ranges from 11 to 40 years. Some families are young (the eldest child being 13 years old) others are old (the eldest child being 29 years old). Most of their children were born in Australia and only a few of them were Indonesia-born. Children mostly have taken Australian passports for more educational and social benefits. A few of

the participants of older families have even Australian-born grandchildren.

Data for this study has been generated from semi-structured interviews, informal talks and participant-observations at homes, community centres, and cultural events over a five year period. Each interview took 30-45 minutes. The interview guide can be found in Appendix 1. Observations at homes and various cultural events were conducted for more than four years; before, during and after the interviews. The results of interviews and observations were then compiled on the basis of emerging themes and analysed by relevant theories of language maintenance and investment as part of cultural identification.

Participation in this study was voluntary. All participants were asked to complete consent forms prior to their participation. Interviews were conducted at their convenience. They were allowed to withdraw from this study anytime at any stages of study. They were also allowed to select information that they considered to be off record. Finally, all names used in this study are pseudonyms. More details about participants can be found in Appendix 2.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Ethnic language maintenance as cultural identification

The concern for communicating cultural identity is often strong among members of ethnic minority groups as part of their culture maintenance. As studies have shown, ethnic identity socialization has been a concern among immigrant communities such as those in the United States, Canada, and Australia (Simon, 1995; Phinney, 1990, 1992, 1996; French, Seidman, Allen & Aber, 2006), including Indonesian families in Melbourne (Mulyana, 1995; Zulfikar, 2011). A study by Umaña-Taylor, Bhanot & Shin (2006) which involved a large number of adolescents from various ethnic backgrounds in the US (Asian Indian, Chinese, Filipino, Vietnamese, and Salvadoran) showed that

Familial Ethnic Socialization (FES) supports exploration, commitment, and belonging to ethnic identity. The mother's family obligation expectations provide positive family identification and ethnic culture learning opportunities that may encourage children's ethnic identity development (Su & Costigan, 2009). For ethnic minority adolescents, ethnic identity is an important aspect of self-concept which is salient during their adolescence (Phinney, 1992; French, Seidman, Allen & Aber, 2006). This ethnic identity has proven to be a critical facet of adolescents' developmental experiences, as it relates to their psychological functioning, supports self-esteem and self-concepts, and promotes cultural adjustment (French, Seidman, Allen & Aber, 2006; Phinney, 1990, 1992, 1996; Umaña-Taylor, Diversi, & Fine, 2002; Lee, 2003, 2006; Phinney, Cantu, & Kurtz, 1997; Tsai, Ying, & Lee, 2001).

In the context of Australia, each minority ethnic group may have a different focus in socializing their cultural values. Speaking the ethnic language is the first cultural practice that members of ethnic minority want to maintain (Clyne, 2005; Willoughby, 2006). Rosenthal & Hrynevich (1985) found that language, religion, social activities, maintenance of cultural traditions, and family life are considered important among Italian and Greek young people. In studying the youth of minority groups of South Asian origins (India, Pakistan and Bangladesh), Ghuman (2001) found that his participants expressed sympathetic attitudes to the retention of core traditional values such as religion, language and primacy of family over individual orientation. A similar association between heritage language maintenance and family relations is also identified by Howie and Tannenbaum (2002) in their study of Chinese immigrant children in Australia. Likewise, Sudanese adolescent refugees in Brisbane, Australia experienced acculturative stress due to their lack of English proficiency and conflicting cultural

rules (Poppitt & Frey, 2007). Among South East Asians, parents might focus more on socializing their children to strong family support and sense of group identity, and respect for the authority of teachers and parents (Tam & Lee, 2010; Elliot & Phuong-Mai, 2008; Rajadurai, 2010).

Another aspect of parental cultural practices is religion. This aspect is particularly considered important among religion-oriented societies like Indonesia, including their youth (Nilan et al., 2011; Nilan, 2008). The provision of support and active involvement in various religious practices contributes to the development of youth who often show enthusiasm for community service (Youniss, McLellan & Yates, 1999; Ream & Savin-Williams, 2006). However, effectiveness of parental religious socialization is determined by the quality of youth relationship with their parents (Dudley, 1999). In general, religious parents tend to have religious children. Additionally, gender is an important factor of religious socialization. In most cases, females are the keepers of home and of the faith. Mothers have a greater influence in religious socialization than fathers (Nelson, 1980; Archer, 1989; Guilamo-Ramos, 2009). Of these cultural aspects, however, ethnic language maintenance is the most important aspect that most migrant families want to instill in their younger generation (Phinney, 1992, 1995; Clyne, 2005; Willoughby, 2006; Moua & Lambourn, 2010) which this study focuses.

### **Speech levels in Sundanese**

Unlike English or Bahasa Indonesia, Sundanese language has great distinctions with various levels of politeness, depending on the people spoken to, shown by vocabulary choice; lemes pisan (very polite), lemes (polite), panengah (rather polite) and kasar (crude/earthy) (Wessing, 1974; Anderson, 1997). The first two levels; lemes pisan and lemes are usually uttered by people of lower level to those of higher levels such as the poor

to the rich, common people to royal family members, or children to parents and elderly people. For example, the lemes pisan/lemes words for eating is 'tuang', and for going is 'angkat'. If a child asks his/her parents, s/he should say, Bade angkat kamana? (Where are you going?). In this sentence, politeness is shown by two words: bade and angkat. People of low position in a government office or company like employees or janitors may say this to his/her employer, Bapak atos tuang? (Have you eaten (breakfast/lunch), Sir?). Again, in this sentence, politeness is evidenced in the use of two words; atos and tuang. This first two levels of politeness is also used by strangers or people who are not intimate with each other.

The second two levels (panengah/kasar) are used by people of similar levels of position, among intimate individuals, or by people of higher to lower in position. Take for instance, the panengah/kasar words for eating is 'dahar' whereas 'indit' is for going. So, a father/mother may ask his/her child, Rek indit kamana maneh? (Where are you going?). Similarly, people of high position in a government office or company may say this to his/her employees, Maneh geus dahar? (Have you eaten?). In the first sentence, panengah/kasar level is represented by the words rek and indit. Meanwhile, the crude or earthy words in the second sentence are represented by the words maneh, geus, and dahar. Maneh is the crude address for the second person whereas the polite word for this address is anjeun. Native speakers of Sundanese have built-in instinct in understanding this level of politeness and use them accordingly in their daily conversation.

Violation of these levels of politeness may lead to offense. People of high rank or elderly may find panengah or kasar words offensive when people address them with these words. They will understand if the speakers are non-native Sundanese but still feel surprised or shocked upon hearing such impolite words for the first time. Native

speakers of Sundanese who cannot use these levels of politeness properly will be considered rude, uneducated or impolite. For this reason, many Sundanese people today, especially the youth and young parents in urban Indonesian areas, prefer to switch to Bahasa Indonesia when communicating with their children's peers, fearing that they utter improper words or expressions when using Sundanese to people of specific ranks or positions. Consequently, as Ewing claims (2014), this makes the Sundanese language, like other local ethnic languages in Indonesia, more endangered of facing extinction.

### **Investment for ethnic language maintenance**

Most ethnic minority parents find the maintenance of their ethnic language very beneficial for their cultural identification. They believe that speaking the language, for instance, enables them to communicate parental advice and other family values to their young people and connect them with extended family in their home country, thus, making better family harmony. Studies by various scholars also show that this ethnic language maintenance is a means of cultural identification which is an essential life objective among diaspora families (Phinney, 1990, 1992, 1996; Barrett, 2005; Guardado & Becker, 2014). It is a means of reviving the threatened and endangered languages (Fishman, 1997) like the Sundanese language which is the concern of the participating families in this study.

Considering its paramount importance in their diasporic life, families of this minority ethnic group have invested time and energy to maintain their ethnic language as their cultural identity (Clyne, 2005; Norton, 2008; Ndhlovu, 2010; Mu, 2014). In the case of the Chinese community in Australia, for example, they have established a Chinese language school so that their younger generation can regain the ethnic language more effectively (Mu, 2014). In

a slightly different way, (not establishing a formal language school like the Chinese), the African community in Australia organized a community centre activity to enhance the use of their ethnic language (Ndhlovu, 2010). Other communities such as the Greeks have built a language school in community centres or sports halls or hospitals in which they socialize their cultural values to their Australian-born young people (Rosenthal & Hrynevich, 1985).

Parental ethnic socialization processes may take various forms. They include speaking a native language, maintaining religious practices, celebrating religious holidays, learning traditional dances and music, teaching behavioural goals and ethnic history, values, norms, and attitudes related to ethnic heritage, promoting ethnic pride, participation in cultural events, preparing traditional food, wearing traditional clothes, strengthening family ties, and marriage preparation (Bagley, Bolitho, & Bertrand, 2001; Moua & Lamborn, 2010). Based on these types of investment in cultural identification, it is interesting to identify what and how the participating parents in this study have invested to maintain their Sundanese ethnic language and culture.

### **FINDINGS**

This study identifies some findings which are divided into Sundanese language use, its perceived benefits among the participants, and investment by participating parents to communicate, promote and maintain this ethnic language for their cultural identification.

#### **Sundanese language use**

The use of Sundanese language among parents is intensive enough. Parents, especially those of Sundanese couples, speak Sundanese when greeting, having short talks, giving simple instruction and advice, showing anger, joking, making food and drink, and telling childhood stories to their children.

Parents use Sundanese language both inside and outside of home. For this reason, children experience intensive listening to Sundanese language, especially at home.

One participant, Ace, said;

I manage to always speak Sundanese with my wife and also children at home or outside. Usually, I use Sundanese for greetings and short instructions, such as *Kadieu!* (Come here!) or *Aya naon?* (What happens?). They usually understand my instruction but answered in English but that's OK (Male, 60s).

Another female participant, Siti, said;

My two children and I have been living in Melbourne for 11 years. My husband has been here for more than 25 years. To cure our longing for Bandung, our home town, I always speak Sundanese to my husband and two children. I also often make Sundanese foods at home such as *siomay* (steamed vegetables stuffed with meat) and *karedok* (salad made of raw vegetables). I believe this will help us remember Bandung.

The use of this ethnic language is less intensive among parents who are a Sundanese and non-Sundanese couple or Sundanese and Australian couple. For the first couple, Sundanese is mixed with Bahasa Indonesia whereas for the second couple, Sundanese is mixed with both Bahasa Indonesia and English. Another female participant, Yarsi, said;

I am fortunate that my Australian husband loves Bandung and Sundanese language. He even considers Bandung his second home town, after Melbourne. He always wants to spend holidays in Indonesia, especially Bandung. But I can't always speak Sundanese to him. I have to mix it with Bahasa Indonesia and of course English.

Despite this intensive listening, however, due to extensive exposure to English, most of the children only understand the routine things their parents say to them, but respond in English. In most families, only the eldest children have a better understanding of

Sundanese, but they still answer their parents in English. Juarsa said that his eldest daughter has better Sundanese language speaking skill than her two younger siblings. Similarly, Ace also claims that compared to her two younger siblings, his eldest daughter has better speaking skill in Sundanese. Besides, she is also a *Jaipong* (traditional Sundanese dance) dancer who often performs at various cultural events around Melbourne.

Due to intensive listening to their parents speaking Sundanese for a lengthy period of time, a few children copy their parents' Sundanese routine words or expressions. A few routine words copied by children include greetings such as *Kumaha damang?* (How are you?), *Muhun* (Yes), *Naon?* (What?), *Kamana* (Where are you going?), *Ari maneh!* (How dare you!), *Rek kamana maneh euy?* (Where are you going?) *Kamana wae?* (Where have you been?). One participant said;

I always ask, *Rek kamana maneh euy?* (Where are you going?) to my three children whenever they want to leave home. Because I always ask this question for years, they understand my question but unfortunately always respond in English. One day, when I was ready to go out, my second son, standing on the doorway, asked, *Rek kamana maneh euy?* I was shocked at first because this form of question is considered impolite when speaking to parents. It is only used by parents to their children. But then I understand that my son may not know how to use this expression. I just smiled to myself (laughter) (Ace, 60s).

Experiencing a similar improper use of Sundanese, another male participant, commented,

When we feel irritated by our children, my wife and I often say, *ari maneh* (how come/ how dare you do it!). After a long time, our children seemed to understand what we meant when saying this Sundanese expression. They usually change their attitudes after hearing this expression. One day, my eldest daughter

who might feel irritated said *ari maneh* to me. I was surprised in the beginning because it is considered impolite for a child to say this to parents. But then I understood that she may not understand how to use it (smile) (Juarsa, 50s).

So, in general, the use of Sundanese language is intensive, especially among Sundanese couples. Meanwhile, non-Sundanese couples modify this ethnic language with English and Bahasa Indonesia. Meanwhile the children respond to this effort to maintain language less positively.

### **Perceived benefits**

Parents believe that maintenance of Sundanese language and culture gives them some benefits. Due to their limited English, they can give short instructions, parental advice and jokes more expressively in Sundanese. One female participant believes that she can communicate parental advice to her children more emotionally in Sundanese.

My English is not really good. I find it difficult to give advice to my children in English. So, I always tell my children to do this and not to do that in Sundanese. It is more relieving to communicate my values in Sundanese (Siti, 40s).

With limited understanding of Sundanese, their children can also communicate with their grandparents and other extended family during regular holidays to Indonesia. This understanding and use of Sundanese in turn add to their family connection or harmony.

When I speak Sundanese to my children, I don't care if they understand or not. I just want to maintain this language of my parents and grandparents. I am happy if they can understand and speak it. That is the best (laughter). I want them to know that their parents are both Sundanese (Ace, 60s).

In addition, due to intensive use of Sundanese, living permanently overseas, parents feel less alienated from their cultural roots. They feel more Sundanese than

Indonesian at home and only feel more Indonesian when they interact with their neighbours and other Australians in the public sphere. Another participant, Asep, a retired Australian national radio broadcaster confirms;

Although my wife and I have been living in Melbourne for more than 30 years, our two children were both born in Bandung. So, I always feel it important to speak Sundanese to my wife and children. We can share jokes more freely in Sundanese. I also use Sundanese to socialize family values of politeness and respect for parents. I feel I still live in Bandung or somewhere (Asep, 70s).

The last perceived benefit of Sundanese use is the socialization of religious teaching. A few parents believe there is an indirect relationship between Sundanese language and religion, in this case, Islam. Based on their childhood experience of learning Islam in West Java cities, parents believe that Sundanese language use can attract their children to learn the teaching of their religion. For this reason, one parent sent his three children to study at two Islamic schools in Bandung. He said,

I believe that Sundanese culture has close relationship with my religion, Islam. I want my children to learn Islam through Sundanese. To give them a real experience of learning Sundanese and Islam together, I sent my three young adult children to study at two Islamic schools in Bandung. My first and third children went to an Islamic public school, and my second son went to an Islamic boarding school. They learnt Islam and Sundanese language there for one year (Ace, 60s).

Ace believes that this relatively lengthy experience of living in Bandung can provide his three children with a relevant and strong basis of knowledge of Islam and Sundanese language, two identities that he wants his three children to hold firmly while living permanently in Australia.

### **Investment for maintenance**

Having realized the importance of Sundanese language and culture maintenance for family harmony and cultural identification, the participating families have invested their time and energy to communicate Sundanese values to their young people. The investments or efforts take several forms, as indicated below.

The first investment that parents have made is having regular holidays to their hometowns in West Java. During this annual or every-other year holiday, some parents took their children to visit villages to introduce them to more original Sundanese culture. They believe that big cities in West Java like Bandung have become multicultural in which Sundanese culture may have been contaminated by other local Indonesian cultures such as Javanese or Minang. The use of Sundanese in urban areas, for example, has been replaced by Bahasa Indonesia which is considered an effective intercultural means of communication. One participant confirms,

During holidays in Indonesia, I sometimes take my children to visit villages in West Java. I believe that Bandung is a big city; the Sundanese culture in Bandung is not pure anymore. It is not as original as in Tasikmalaya or Cianjur (Cicuh, 50s).

The second investment is sending children to study/live in West Java for a certain period of time. One parent sent his three teen children to study and live in Bandung for one year. As he wants his children to learn not only Sundanese culture but also religious teaching, he sent his two children to an Islamic school and another son to an Islamic boarding school. Another parent did not send his daughter for this length of time but only one month, every school holiday in Australia, usually in December every year. One participant confirmed,

When my three children are in secondary college, I sent all of them to study in Bandung for one year. My first daughter and third son went to an Islamic school. They

stayed with their uncle who lives near the school. My second son studied at an Islamic boarding school. I didn't worry leaving them there because they have uncles and aunts in Bandung. For their health, I entrust it to one of their uncles who is a doctor. I believe that they can learn a lot of things from this one year study and live (Ace, 60s).

Another parent said that he actually wanted to send his two children to study in Bandung for a certain period of time, but cancelled his decision due to security and wellbeing reasons. Another parent whose partner is not Sundanese did not send his three children to study in Indonesia because they went to an Islamic school in Melbourne, from primary school to secondary college. He and his wife believe that their children have enough religious teaching at this school.

Another investment is installing Sundanese cultural artefacts at home. The artefacts include food and drink, clothes, and musical instruments. Almost all parents always cook Sundanese food for their children, especially during special occasions. They prepare siomay (steamed vegetable with meat), baso tahu (tofu and meat bowl) and es cendol (ice flour drops) during religious celebrations of Idul Fitri and Idul Adha. Male members of the family also wear bendo (cap) and batik shirts whereas females wear kabaya (female batik dress) when attending wedding parties or other cultural events. One parent has a set of Angklung (bamboo musical instruments) in his living room. Another parent has a kacapi (Sundanese guitar) which he sometimes plays during his spare time with the family. One of the women has several sets of Sundanese wedding clothing that she lends to people who need them for cultural events. One male participant commented,

I have a set of Angklung at home. Although I don't play it, my children know that it is a Sundanese musical instrument. I also sometimes make Sundanese food and wear batik for cultural celebrations (Juarsa, 50s).

Finally, to endorse their cultural identity more intensively, some parents join Paguyuban Pasundan (The Association of Sundanese) in Melbourne. This association strives to promote Sundanese language and culture, as part of Indonesian culture, to the Australian public, particularly in Melbourne. Paguyuban Pasundan regularly joins cultural events held by the government of Australia in Melbourne. Representing the Indonesian Consulate General in Melbourne, they perform Rampak Kendang (traditional Sundanese drums) during the annual Mumba Festival in Melbourne and Pako Festival in Geelong Victoria. To promote Sundanese culture more intensively, in 2015, Paguyuban Pasundan organized two big cultural events. The first event was called Kabayan in Love. Kabayan is a popular cultural figure among Sundanese people. The story talks about the migration of Kabayan from a small West Java village to Melbourne, in search of his lover, Iteung who has moved to Australia. The second event, which was the sequel of the first one, was called Kabayan Gets Married. As the title suggests, it describes the marriage of Kabayan with his lover. The focus of this event was to introduce the Sundanese wedding process which is a combination of religious and cultural rituals. The two events were considered a big success.

One female participant confirmed her active participation in Paguyuban Pasundan activities,

Although my husband and I don't speak Sundanese to our children at home, we love Sundanese language and culture. We always take part in Paguyuban Pasundan programs such as monthly meetings and cultural events. My husband played the main character in Kabayan in Love and Kabayan Gets Married. My eldest son and I also perform some Sundanese songs (Ines, 30s).

The various findings above show that each participating parent, in their own capacity, has shown their own investment for maintaining the Sundanese language and

culture that they love as part their cultural identification. They have made various efforts to socialize the Sundanese language and culture to their Australia-born children.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

Living overseas permanently, most participating parents realize the importance of their Sundanese language maintenance for their cultural identification. They believe that they have to invest time and energy to communicate and socialize this ethnic language and culture to their children as part of their cultural identity (Phinney, 1990; Clyne, 2005; Norton, 2008; Ndhlovu, 2010; Mu, 2014). The routine use of Sundanese language also enables parents to give advice and communicate family values more expressively, adding to their family harmony (Barett, 2008; Guardado & Becker, 2014). In addition to parental respect, another family value that participating parents want to instil through the use of Sundanese language is religion, in this case, Islam. Based on what they have learnt during childhood back in Indonesia, parents use Sundanese language as a means to teach religious values such as respect for the elderly and taking care of them when they are old. This finding supports the previous studies by Nilan (2008) and Nilan, Donaldson, and Howson (2009) who suggest that religion is considered an important aspect in the life of most Indonesians, including the participating parents in this study.

Various factors influence this Sundanese ethnic language maintenance by participating parents. They include ethnically homogenous marriage, education, and passion for Sundanese language and culture. Sundanese couples tend to have more intensive use of Sundanese than non-Sundanese couples. More educated parents tend to show stronger commitment to their ethnic language maintenance. They believe that, as an ethnic minority, they share similar rights to show their cultural identity as other ethnic minority groups in Australia. Moreover, a few participants, being less

educated and working in non-professional jobs, show strong passion for maintaining Sundanese language and culture. They involve themselves in various cultural activities, promoting Sundanese and other local Indonesian culture to the Australian public. Supporting Norton (2008), for them, investment for language maintenance comes from the heart, not logic or academic discourse.

However, this effort for maintenance does not always run smoothly and effectively. The investment participating parents have made in using Sundanese language for daily routines is contested by their children's unawareness and greater inclination to English language. As the results of the interviews reveal, most children do not really take heed of the use of Sundanese language that their parents have socialized enthusiastically. It seems that the culture of current settlement, which is the Australian culture, has stronger influence on the children's sense of belonging and that they are more inclined to speak English than the Sundanese language. Barrett (2005) argues that peers provide a strong influence on the sense of belonging and feeling of national groups. Strongly influenced by their Australian peers, the second generation of the study participants seem to be more inclined to the use of English than Sundanese or even the Indonesian language.

Despite their children's ignorance, parents' continuous effort to use Bahasa Indonesia in daily routines seems to bring about little success. Some children understand greetings and short instructions in Sundanese but respond to their parents in English. The greetings that parents often utter to their children include *Aya naon euy?* (What happens?), *Naon eta?* (What's that?), *Cageur maneh?* (Are you OK?), *Rek ngopi?* (You want coffee?), *Geus dahar?* (Have you eaten?). Parents still feel happy with their children's limited understanding of Sundanese. This is considered better than

nothing or losing it at all (Moua & Lamborn, 2010; Clyne, 2005). In line with the finding of the previous study, for most ethnic minority groups in Australia, Willoughby (2006) found that speaking the ethnic language is the least effort young people made in maintaining cultural and language identity.

It is interesting that, having heard greetings and short instructions from their parents repeatedly for a lengthy period of time, a few children copied their parents' greetings or expressions but without realizing the correct level of politeness. For example, one child who often heard the expression *Kamana maneh euy?* (Where are you going?) from his father every time he wanted to leave the house, one day parroted back this expression to his father on the door-way when the father wanted to go out. Another father reported that his daughter said *Ari maneh?* (How come! or How dare you do it!) to him when she felt disturbed or annoyed. At first, both parents felt shocked upon hearing their children's copying of these phrases because they are considered impolite to be expressed by children to parents. This *kasar* (crude/earthy) speech level is acceptably used by higher authority to lower one, such as by parents to their children, not the other way around (Wessing, 1974; Anderson, 1997). However, these two parents also realized that, due to limited knowledge of politeness levels and the influence of more egalitarian English, their children may not understand how to use these expressions properly.

Another interesting issue of ethnic language maintenance is that the older the families, the stronger the maintenance of Sundanese. This may be due to low English language fluency by older family members who usually work as blue collar workers. In contrast, younger families who work more professionally have better English skills, thus, causing them switch to English more easily and to lose their Sundanese language.

One reason for the limited use of Sundanese by families, especially among the

young ones, is that this ethnic language has levels of politeness. This politeness is often considered a barrier to the use of Sundanese language among young families who have better English skills than the old ones. If care is not taken, continuous avoidance of Sundanese language among young families and children will lead to the extinction of this ethnic language (Fishman, 1997; Clyne, 2005; Ewing, 2014), which will be a great loss for the rich linguistic diversity of Indonesia.

Interviews also showed that in most families, the eldest child tends to have better skill in Sundanese language than the younger ones. Most parents acknowledge that their first born children have relatively better Sundanese knowledge than their younger siblings. First born children tend to have better listening skills of Sundanese than their younger siblings. This means that young families (when they have their first child) have more idealism and enthusiasm to socialize and maintain their ethnic language of Sundanese. Time changes their idealism into pragmatism so that they become more realistic in using Sundanese language with their younger children. In addition, younger children also have less peer influence so that parental influence is stronger. Regardless of these changes, the above-mentioned efforts made by parents in socializing Sundanese language in their families show evidence of strong investment for language and culture maintenance (Phinney, 1990; Clyne, 2005; Norton, 2008; Ndhlovu, 2010; Mu, 2014) among most parents of Sundanese diaspora families in Melbourne.

In relation to gender in cultural identification, previous studies support the idea that females as the keepers of home, faith and culture. (Nelson, 1980; Archer, 1989; Guilamo-Ramos, 2009). This study also shows that gender seems to have an important issue in ethnic language and culture maintenance. Some parents focus on their daughters to socialize and promote Sundanese language and culture. During my

observations, I found one female child who speaks Sundanese fairly fluently, whereas most male children only understand the language. A daughter of one of the participants is also a Jaipong (Sundanese dance) dancer who often performs in various cultural events and festivals. When she got married, she had to take time out from her dancing performance activities due to her pregnancy. During the Kabayan Gets Married event in mid-2015, her father requested that she perform again for the first time, after a long break, due to her delivering two children. Again, in this case, her father had more concern than his daughter for the maintenance of Sundanese language and culture.

## CONCLUSIONS

This study produces with several conclusions. First, despite parents' high interests in ethnic language maintenance, the use of Sundanese language is limited. Parents, (especially where both are Sundanese,) work very hard to persistently introduce the use of Sundanese language to their children to socialize parental values and religious teachings. Unfortunately, this effort of maintenance is almost ignored by children who contest it with English. Consequently, they only understand a few Sundanese expressions spoken by their parents and they respond in English.

As a result of continuous efforts, some children copy a few parental routine greetings, without realizing the different level of politeness. A few children responded to their parents in coarse Sundanese greetings which surprised them. Appreciating their children's willingness to copy routine expressions, parents were still happy with their children's limited use of Sundanese.

Next, most parents consider Sundanese language and culture important as a means of association with their heritage and their cultural values of parental respect, advice, and childhood memories. They have made various efforts to maintain Sundanese

language and culture in their children's lives. Parents' investment for maintenance include regular holidays to their country of origin, sending children to study in Indonesia, promotion of Sundanese culture at home and at cultural events, particularly through Paguyuban Pasundan. In terms of gender, females seem to be consistently strong cultural carriers.

## REFERENCES

- Anderson, E. K. (1997). Speech Levels: The case of Sundanese. *Pragmatics*, 3 (7), pp. 107-136.
- Archer, S. L. (1989). Gender differences in identity development: Issues of process, domain and timing. *Journal of Adolescence*, 12, 117-138.
- Bagley, C., Bolitho, F., & Bertrand, L. (2001). Ethnicities and social adjustment in Canadian adolescents. *Journal of International Migration and Integration*, 2(99-119).
- Barrett, M. (2005). Children's understanding of, and feelings about, countries and national groups. In M. Barrett & E. Buchanan-Barrow (Eds.). *Children's understanding of society* (pp. 251-285). Hove: Psychology Press.
- Clyne, M. (2005). *Australia's language potential*. Sydney: University of New South Wales Press Ltd.
- Dudley, R. I. (1999). Youth religious commitment over time: A longitudinal study of retention *Review of Religious Research*, 41(1), 109-120.
- Elliot, J.G. & Phuong-Mai, Ng. (2008). Western influences on the east, eastern influences on the west: Lessons for the East and West. In Oon S. Tan, D.M. McInerney, Arief D. Liem, & A. Tan (Eds.) *What the west can learn from the east: A sub-perspectives on the psychology of learning and motivation*. National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore: Information Age Publishing, Inc.
- Ewing, M. C. (2014). Language endangerment in Indonesia. *International Journal of Education*, 8 (1), 12-22.
- Fishman, J. A. (1997). *Reversing language shift: Theoretical and empirical foundations of assistance to threatened languages*. Clevedon: Multilingual Matters Ltd.
- French, S. E., Seidman, E., Grant, W., Allen, L., & Aber, J. L. (2006). The Development of Ethnic Identity During Adolescence. *Developmental Psychology* 42(1), 1-10.
- Ghuman, P. A. S. (2001). Self-identity issues of South Asian young people in Australian schools. *Australian Journal of Education*, 45(1), 48-61.
- Guardado, M., & Becker, A. (2014). 'Glued to the family': The role of familism in heritage language development strategies *Language, Culture and Curriculum*, 27(2), 163-181. doi.org/10.1080/07908318.2014.912658
- Guilamo-Ramos, V. (2009). Maternal Influence on Adolescent Self-Esteem, Ethnic Pride and Intentions to Engage in Risk Behaviour in Latino Youth. *Prevention Science*, 10 (4), 366-375.
- Howie, P., & Tannenbaum, M. (2002). The Association between Language Maintenance and Family Relations: Chinese Immigrant Children in Australia. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 23(5), 408-424.
- Joseph, J.E. (2004). *Language and identity: National, ethnic, religious*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Lee, R. (2006). 'Flexible citizenship': Strategic Chinese identities in Asian Australian literature. *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, 27(1-2), 213-227.
- Lee, R. M. (2003). Do ethnic identity and other group orientation protect against discrimination for Asian Americans? *Journal of Counselling Psychology*, 50(2), 133-141.
- Moua, M. Y., & Lamborn, S. D. (2010). *Hmong American adolescents'*

- perceptions of ethnic socialization. *Journal of Adolescence Research*, 25 (3), 416-440.
- Mu, G. M. (2014). Heritage language learning for Chinese Australians: The role of habitus. *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, 35 (5), pp. 497-510. DOI: 10.1080/01434632.2014.882340
- Mulyana, D. (1995). Twenty-five Indonesians in Melbourne: A study of the social construction and transformation of ethnic identity. Unpublished doctoral thesis, Monash University, Monash Clayton Australia.
- Ndhlovu, F. (2010). Belonging and attitude towards ethnic languages among African migrants in Australia. *Australian Journal of Linguistics*, 30 (3), pp. 299-321. DOI: 10.1080/07268601003678643
- Nelson, H. M. (1980). Religious Transmission Versus Religious Formation: Preadolescent-Parent Interaction. *Sociological Quarterly*, 21(2), 207-218.
- Nilan, P. (2008). Youth transitions to urban, middle-class marriage in Indonesia: Faith, family and finances. *Journal of Youth Studies*, 11(1), 65-82.
- Nilan, P., Donaldson, M., & Howson, R. (2009). Indonesian Muslim masculinity in Australia. In Peas, B., Donaldson, M., Howson, R., & Hibbins, R. (Eds). *Migrant men: Critical studies on men masculinity and the migration experience*. London: Taylor and Francis.
- Norton, B. (2000). *Identity and Language Learning: Gender, Ethnicity and Educational Change*. New York: Longman.
- Origin, Immigrant communities in Victoria. Retrieved February 9, 2015. Available at <http://museumvictoria.com.au/origins/history.aspx?pid=27>
- Phinney, J. S. (1990). Ethnic identity in adolescents and adults: Review of research. *Psychological Bulletin*, 108(3), 499-514.
- Phinney, J. S. (1992). The multi-group ethnic identity measure: A new scale for use with diverse group. *Journal of Adolescence Research*, 7(2), 156-176.
- Phinney, J. S. (1996). Understanding ethnic diversity: The role of ethnic identity. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 40, 143-152.
- Phinney, J. S., Cantu, C. L., & Kurtz, D. A. (1997). Ethnic and American identity as predictors of self-esteem among African American, Latino, and White adolescents. *Journal of Adolescence*, 26(2), 165-185.
- Poppitt, G., & Frey, R. (2007). Sudanese adolescent refugees: acculturation and acculturative stress. *Australian Journal of Guidance & Counselling*, 17(2), 160-181.
- Rajadurai, J. (2010). Malays are expected to speak Malay: Community ideologies, language use, and the negotiation of identities. *Journal of Language, Identity and Education*, 9, 91-106. DOI: 10.1080/15348451003704776
- Ream, G. L., & Savin-Williams, R. G. (2006). Religious development in adolescence. In G. R. Adams & M. D. Berzonsky (Eds.), *Blackwell handbook of adolescence* (pp. 51-59). Malden, M.A.: Blackwell Publishing.
- Rosenthal, D. A., & Hrynevich, C. (1985). Ethnicity and ethnic identity: A comparative study of Greek-, Italian-, and Anglo-Australian adolescents. *International Journal of Psychology*, 20(6), 723.
- Simon, J. L. (1995). *The economic consequences of immigration*. Oxford UK: Basil Blackwell.
- Su, T. F., & Costigan, C. L. (2009). The Development of Children's Ethnic Identity in Immigrant Chinese Families in Canada: The Role of Parenting Practices and Children's Perceptions of Parental Family Obligation Expectations. *Journal of Early Adolescence*, 29 (5), 638-663. DOI: 10.1177/0272431608325418
- Tam, K.T. & Lee, S.L. (2010). What values do parents want to socialize in their children?

- The role of perceived normative values. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology*, 41 (2), p. 175-181.
- Tsai, J. L., Ying, Y.-W., & Lee, P. A. (2001). Cultural predictors of self-esteem: A study of Chinese American male and female young adults *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology*, 7 (3), 284-297.
- Umana-Taylor, A. J., Banot, R., & Shin, N. (2006). Ethnic identity formation during adolescence: The critical role of families. *Journal of Family Issues*, 27 (3), 390-414.
- Umana-Taylor, A. J., Diversi, M., & Fine, M. A. (2002). Ethnic identity and self-esteem of Latino adolescents: Distinctions among the Latin population *Journal of Adolescence Research*, 17 (3), 303-327.
- Wessing, R. (1974). Language levels in Sundanese. *Man*, 9, pp. 5-22.
- Willoughby, L.J.V. (2006). "You have to speak it at least"; Language and identity maintenance among Australian migrant teenagers. Unpublished doctoral thesis, Language and Society Centre, Monash University.
- Youniss, J., McLellan, J. A., & Yates, M. (1999). Religion, community service, and identity in American youth. *Journal of Adolescence*, 22, 243-253.
- Zulfikar, T. (2011). Young Indonesian-Muslims in Australia: Identity, Family and the Ummah. Doctoral dissertation, Faculty of Education, Monash University, Australia.