

Factors of Language Dominance Chosen by Young Self-Learning Bilinguals on X Platform

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Abstrak

Studi ini bertujuan untuk mengeksplorasi pola dominasi bahasa Inggris di antara bilingual muda yang belajar sendiri di platform X, sekaligus mengungkap faktor-faktor yang mempengaruhi kemampuan mereka untuk berkomunikasi dengan orang lain dalam bahasa Inggris. Selain itu, studi ini juga menganalisis bagaimana penggunaan bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa dominan memengaruhi pembelajar bilingual muda tersebut. Penelitian ini mengadopsi pendekatan kualitatif, mengumpulkan data melalui wawancara mendalam dengan peserta dan memfokuskan pada akun media sosial dari pemuda bilingual yang terlibat dalam pembelajaran mandiri di platform X. Data yang dikumpulkan dianalisis melalui proses pengkondensasian data yang mengarah pada kesimpulan. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa bahasa tertentu memainkan peranan penting dalam membangun hubungan emosional dan meningkatkan kemampuan berbahasa, yang pada gilirannya memengaruhi penggunaan bahasa dominan di kalangan bilingual muda yang belajar sendiri di X dengan menciptakan koneksi bermakna melalui bahasa. Selain itu, studi ini membahas bagaimana suatu bahasa dapat mengembangkan keterampilan linguistik melalui pola interaksi komunikatif yang dapat memengaruhi preferensi dan kemampuan bahasa setiap individu. Hal ini menyoroti korelasi positif antara kemampuan dalam satu bahasa dan kemampuan dalam bahasa lainnya, sambil menekankan berbagai dinamika interaksi di antara faktor-faktor seperti keterampilan bahasa, latar belakang pribadi, penguasaan bahasa, serta kemampuan untuk menafsirkan dan memahami hasil komunikasi.

Kata Kunci: Bahasa Dominan, Remaja Bilingual Mandiri

Abstract

This study aimed to explore the patterns of English language dominance among young self-learning bilinguals on platform X, while also uncovering the factors that affected their ability to communicate with others in English. Additionally, it examined how the use of English as the dominant language impacted these young bilingual learners. The research employed a qualitative approach, gathering data through in-depth interviews with participants and focusing on the social media accounts of bilingual youth engaged in independent learning on platform X. The collected data was analyzed through a data condensation process leading to conclusions. The findings indicated that specific languages played a significant role in fostering emotional connections and enhancing language proficiency, which in turn influenced the dominant language usage among young self-learning bilinguals on X by creating meaningful connections through language. Furthermore, the study discussed how a language could develop linguistic skills through patterns of communicative interaction, which could affect each individual's language preferences and proficiencies. It highlighted the positive correlation between proficiency in one language and proficiency in another, emphasizing the various interaction dynamics among factors such as language skills, personal backgrounds, language delivery, and the ability to interpret and understand communication outcomes.

Keywords: Language Dominance, Young Self-Learning Bilingual

1. INTRODUCTION

Language is a vital element of human communication, significantly shaping our thoughts, expressions, and interactions. The language of each country reflects its unique identity (Michael, 2006), serving as a symbol through which individuals express their identities. For example, different regional groups often develop their own dialects. In our globalized and

interconnected world, there is an increasing acknowledgment of the importance of learning languages beyond one's native tongue to engage effectively with others. Individuals proficient in multiple languages are commonly termed bilingual or multilingual (Sholikah, 2018). Among these languages, English has emerged as a widely favored medium, facilitating communication

across various contexts and communities worldwide (Crystal, 2003).

The evolution of language is a captivating area of study within the field of language phenomena, making bilingual individuals particularly interesting due to their distinct experiences in acquiring a second language (Andriani et al., 2022). Various motivations drive young bilinguals to learn new languages, with researchers noting that their environments' exposure to multiple languages fosters this ability (Altinkamis & Simon, 2020). As a result, many young people in such environments become bilingual, whether by choice or circumstance.

From a socio-psychological perspective, bilingualism involves acquiring two or more languages and is regarded as a lifelong journey influenced by a range of life experiences (Bhatia, 2019). Some young bilingual individuals choose to learn new languages independently, which empowers them to control their learning process. This self-directed approach allows them to customize their pace and content based on their interests, often concentrating on topics they find engaging and challenging (Widiantari et al., 2019). Additionally, the wealth of online resources gives young bilinguals access to various materials, including language learning apps, online courses, language exchange platforms, and opportunities to communicate with people globally.

The digital landscape significantly impacts the changing dynamics of communication in our interconnected world. This online environment facilitates effective communication, influencing how language is utilized and shaping interaction patterns and language preferences (Baruah, 2012). A notable trend is the use of digital platforms for communication, particularly on social media sites like X. This platform enables users to post messages of 280 characters or fewer and follow others with similar interests, topics, or affiliations. Many believe that learning happens in a social and emotional context, and X promotes this through its rapid-response feature, which offers instant feedback (Chelsea, 2013). This functionality dramatically transforms how people communicate, naturally evolving language through the increased use of acronyms, abbreviations, shortened words, and emojis (Jebaselvi et al., 2023).

Moreover, Jebaselvi (2023) highlights that language use impacts how individuals perceive themselves and others, creating a culture where people are often evaluated based on their language skills and follower counts, particularly on X. Nonetheless, many young self-directed bilinguals see this as a benefit, leveraging X as a resource to enhance their language learning. The digital communication tools available in this space make them feel more comfortable sharing their ideas and questions (Chelsea, 2013). Additionally, X emphasizes the

significance of language choice as it represents their primary language, illustrating the evolving landscape of language acquisition and communication.

To truly understand the linguistic choices of young self-directed bilinguals, a thorough exploration of their language preferences is crucial. The prevalence of English as a dominant language raises questions about the factors influencing their language choices and communication skills beyond formal educational environments (Rao, 2019). This area of research opens avenues for investigating how language and digital communication intertwine among young self-directed bilinguals within the context of the shifting online linguistic landscape.

2. METHOD

This research uses qualitative descriptive techniques, which concerned the structures and patterns. It also refers in the broadest sense to research that produces descriptive data in the form of written or spoken words about people or behavior. This meant the data were in the form of description. Data collection was carried out using interview techniques to dig deeper into the factors of why the young self-learning bilinguals chose English as their language dominant.

The informants of this study are self-learning bilinguals who actively use X and have been interacting with the researcher for a year. Specifically, the informants were youngsters aged approximately 17-25 years who use English as their dominant language more instead of their first language, but are proficient in both Indonesian and English. They learned English in their formal education (12 years) and continue to learn English by themselves through social media or any other online platforms.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Results

This part presents the findings of the study based on data collected from interviews. The data were analyzed to obtain descriptive data to answer the research questions. In examining the phenomenon of language dominance among young bilinguals on platform X, several key concepts emerge that underscore the intricate relationship between language proficiency, emotional factors, and language exposure. This approach ensures comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted interactions that govern language use among young bilinguals, collectively influence the dynamics of bilingual communication on platform X, fostering meaningful connections and shaping individuals' language dominance.

a. Language Proficiency

The findings reveal that language proficiency significantly influences individuals' communication choices. Informant R's preference for English over Indonesian highlights a complex interplay between comfort and proficiency levels. The insights shared by Informant R illustrate how her greater command of English facilitates more casual and relaxed interactions on social media, shaping her language preference in everyday communication.

Informant R expressed that she feels more comfortable and proficient when sharing her thoughts and emotions in English, indicating a preference for using this language as her primary medium of expression. She stated, "I use English in my tweets because when I communicate in Indonesian, the tone tends to be overly normative and formal. Moreover, English allows me to maintain a casual and relaxed style."

By exploring Informant R's choice to favor English over Indonesian for her daily social media interactions, the researcher examines this linguistic decision through the complex relationship between language proficiency. It becomes clear that language proficiency significantly affects how individuals choose to communicate, with a strong command of one language often impacting the selection and use of another—particularly in contexts where one language is perceived as more suited for informal communication. Informant R's view of Indonesian as "very normative and formal" highlights her sense of greater proficiency or comfort with English for casual exchanges, illustrating a language selection process rooted in her proficiency levels.

Her preference for English over Indonesian reveals underlying dynamics of language transfer and dominance. By adopting English as her primary language for everyday social media interactions, Informant R consciously prioritizes it over Indonesian, mindful of the formalities and linguistic conventions that accompany her native language. This intentional choice also reflects her perceived dominance and competence in English, wherein her decisions are shaped by her self-assessment of proficiency and situational context.

Additionally, Informant R recognizes the limitations of using Indonesian in a formal and normative manner, prompting her to adjust her language preference to suit the informal communicative needs of social media, where a more casual tone is generally preferred.

b. Emotional Factors

Emotional connections play a pivotal role in language dominance decisions. Informant A's experiences underline the importance of feelings of comfort, safety, and belonging, particularly within marginalized communities. Her commitment to using English as her primary language serves not only practical communication needs but also emotional and social connections, emphasizing the language's role in fostering inclusive spaces and cultural exploration.

Informant A shared that her reasons for using English include feelings of comfort and safety, along with various emotional factors. She explained, "Honestly, it's because X feels like a safe space for me as a queer person... Beyond that, I can connect with friends who share similar values, and it's really easy to engage with tweets from people across different countries, races, and interests, filled with diverse idioms and slang."

She prioritizes English as her primary language on social media platforms like X, a choice rooted in a complex interaction of emotional factors, particularly feelings of safety, belonging, and cultural exploration. The emotional aspects linked to her preference for English reveal a profound sense of comfort and connection with others who share her perspectives within the digital realm. She articulates that English and X provide a sanctuary for her as a member of the queer community, representing a safe space where she can genuinely express her identity and find support among peers. This emotional connection to the language goes beyond practical communication, positioning English as a means of fostering belonging and empowerment in a welcoming community. Her experience aligns with the theories proposed by Linck and Bialystok (2017), Bentahila (1983), and Schmidt (2018), emphasizing the emotional richness of her experiences.

Moreover, Informant A's emotional investment in using English on social media is reflected in her eagerness to connect with friends who resonate with her values and interests. This engagement immerses her in a wealth of cultural exchanges and a vibrant array of idioms and slang. The appeal of cultural diversity and the opportunities for meaningful interactions through shared language experiences enhance the emotional significance of using English as a means for intercultural dialogue and community building on platforms like X. Ultimately, the intricate relationship between emotional connections, feelings of safety, community ties, and cross-cultural exploration highlights the significant role that emotional factors play in shaping Informant A's language dominance decisions and communication strategies within the digital landscape. These emotional nuances not only shape her online identity but also act as catalysts for fostering inclusive communities, nurturing relationships, and promoting intercultural understanding and exchange within the lively interactions on X.

c. Language Exposure

The exposure to the English language through various media significantly impacts language acquisition and preference. As seen with Informant H, increased engagement with English-language media correlates with a stronger inclination towards using English in her daily interactions. This consistent exposure provides essential linguistic input, facilitating language learning while simultaneously illustrating the constraints and realities that limit exclusive language usage.

Informant H remarked: "I consume media in English more often than in Indonesian; if I could, I would prefer to speak English all the time, but that's not possible." Informant H exhibits a stronger tendency to engage with media in English rather than Indonesian, indicating a significant preference for the English language. This increased exposure to English through media consumption can greatly influence language acquisition by providing a consistent source of linguistic input for learning and practice. Her desire to speak English exclusively highlights the high value she places on using the language, likely motivated by the cognitive benefits and communicative advantages associated with bilingualism. However, her

acknowledgment that speaking only in English is impractical underscores the impact of real-world constraints on language use and the need to consider contextual factors in language learning and choice.

Discussions

The elements that impact young self-learning bilinguals' preference for a dominant language on the social media platform X are examined in this analysis. Drawing on research by Linck & Bialystok (2017), Bentahila (1983), and Schmidt (2018), the study identifies key factors influencing language dominance decisions, such as language proficiency, emotional ties, and exposure to languages. Language proficiency emerges as a crucial factor, illustrated by informants who express confidence and ease when communicating in English. Their inclination towards English stems from their daily exposure to the language, emphasizing the essential role that proficiency plays in determining language preference and the dynamic nature of language acquisition and communication habits. This observation supports Zoubi's (2018) claim that exposure to English significantly impacts learners' dominant language choices and shapes their perceptions of it.

Emotional aspects also significantly influence language preferences. For example, informants A and M favor using English on X, motivated by feelings of safety, belonging, and cultural exploration. Their emotional attachment to the language extends beyond basic communication (Rabiah, 2012), acting as a vehicle for empowerment and connection within a supportive community. This underscores the profound effect of emotional factors on language dominance and communication strategies in the digital environment, highlighting the importance of fostering inclusive communities and promoting intercultural understanding.

Additionally, the study suggests that language exposure affects language choices, with informants displaying tailored language preferences. This adaptive language behavior not only enhances effective communication but also provides cognitive advantages associated with bilingualism, facilitating cross-cultural interactions in various social settings (Marian & Shook, 2012). The strategic language choices reflect cognitive processing strategies designed to optimize communication effectiveness and manage cognitive demands, showcasing the benefits of adaptive language processing among bilingual individuals.

In summary, this study provides valuable insights into the intricate interplay of factors affecting young self-learning bilinguals in their choice of a dominant language on social media. By exploring elements such as language

proficiency, emotional connections, personal backgrounds, contextual demands, language exposure, and cognitive load, it becomes evident how bilinguals navigate linguistic environments to express themselves, forge connections, and promote inclusive online communities.

4. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study elucidates the multifaceted factors that influence young self-learning bilinguals in choosing their dominant language on the social media platform known as X. It underscores the critical roles of language proficiency, emotional connections, and language exposure in shaping these bilingual individuals' language preferences. The findings highlight how a strong command of English, supported by consistent exposure in their environments, fosters both comfort and effectiveness in communication. Furthermore, the emotional significance tied to language use enriches their experiences, promoting feelings of safety, belonging, and empowerment within their online communities. The adaptive language behaviors demonstrated by informants reveal an intricate balance between cognitive strategies and social context, emphasizing the advantages of bilingualism in navigating diverse interactions. Overall, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of how bilinguals skillfully maneuver through linguistic landscapes to express their identities, forge meaningful connections, and cultivate inclusive digital spaces.

Suggestions

To address the limitations of the current study, future research should include how language dominance decisions manifest across different social media platforms and digital environments. This would provide a broader understanding of the dynamics influencing language choices in varied contexts.

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