The language attitude of border peoples

Insular Riau, West Kalimantan, East Kalimantan, North Sulawesi, and the Eastern Sunda Islands

DENDY SUGONO, IMAM BUDI UTOMO, MENUK HARDANIWATI, AND FORIYANI SUBIYATNINGSIH

ABSTRACT

This research aims at describing (1) the language use of border area societies (Insular Riau, West Kalimantan, East Kalimantan, North Sulawesi, and the Eastern Sunda Islands) in terms of local language (BD), Indonesian (BI), and foreign language (BA) in the domains of family, society, and occupation, (2) language activity of border area societies relating to news observation, language attention, and language constraints in mass media, (3) language attitude of border area societies towards BD, BI, and BA. The findings are as follows. First, within the family and society at large, BD is more frequently used than BI and BA. This shows that BD functions in non-formal situations. In the professional field, however, BI is more frequently used than BD. Second, people in border provinces widely observe mass media, whether printed or electronic. They also often pay attention to the language the mass media uses. Third, border societies have a positive attitude towards BD as is shown (agree/totally agree) by the answers to eight questions relating to BD. The language attitude of border societies towards BI is positive based on the answers (agree/totally agree) to

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seven questions concerning BI. This also means that BI is prestigious for border people, especially in formal communication. The language attitude of border societies towards BA is mixed. In as far as it is negative it implies a positive evaluation of BD and BI because people appreciate them as part of their local and national identities.

KEYWORDS

Language attitude, border area societies, local language, Indonesian, foreign language.

1.1 Background¹

Research on language attitude is usually limited to language itself (Anderson in Suhardi 1996). However, the concept of language attitude also extends to language speakers (Ladegaard 2000). In a wider interpretation, the concept comprises all behaviour connected with the language under discussion, for instance, language protection and language planning (Fasold 1984). According to W.E. Lambert et al. (1967), language attitude has three components: cognitive, affective, and conative. The cognitive component relates to reasoning, intuition, and perception. The affective component is related to emotional reactions whereas the conative component relates to tendencies toward particular behaviour.

National language planning in part deals with language development (enhancement of the quality of language use and the consolidation of the language system), with language guidance (enhancement of the quality of language use and a positive attitude toward language), and with efforts to increase the care people have for their language (Sugono 2004; Lauder 2008). This care relates to the language attitude of its speakers and shows itself in language loyalty or language antipathy. Language attitude depends to a large extent on the prestige the language is perceived to have. The higher this prestige, the higher the loyalty the speakers display toward it (compare Pierson et al. 1980; Garret et al. 2003).

Language standardization is one of the means to give prestige to a language. According to Garvin and Mathiot (as quoted in Eastman 1983), there are three criteria to measure language appraisal, (1) based on its intrinsic properties marked by its stability as well as its flexibility and its capacity to express abstract concepts with precition and transparancy; (2) based on the language's function in the community of its speakers and their attitude toward it; and (3) based on the language's capacity to unite speakers from different dialects into a single society of speakers distinct from speakers of other languages.

Measured against these criteria, Indonesian shows its quality in the first and third categories whereas it still has to cope with its speakers' tendency not

¹ We would like to thank Dick van der Meij for his translation of our article from Indonesian to English. We are also grateful to Hein Steinhauer and Lilie Roosman for their comments that enabled us to improve this paper.

yet to display language loyalty. As a prestigious language (based on these two criteria), Indonesian should be the linguistic frame of reference enabling its speakers to show who "they" are and "what their language" is. This function can be measured by looking at to what extent it is used in literature, business correspondence, and the mass media.

The results of the Indonesian language mapping project show that there are about eight major languages in Indonesia. The regional languages with more than one million speakers have the potency to continue to exist. These languages are Javanese, Sundanese, Malay, Balinese, Madurese, Minang, Batak, and Acehnese. Among these, Jakarta Malay's function seems to have changed as it has developed into a new lingua franca, especially among the younger generations. Many small languages, especially in Papua, will disappear in a natural way because of diminishing numbers of speakers (Rumbrawer 2008). In order to revitalize them, strong and serious measures are required. As a minimal requirement dictionaries and grammars of these languages have to be compiled in order to document and inventory them.

Indonesian occupies a middle position in prestige among foreign and local languages. This means that Indonesian is presumably more prestigious than local languages. As regards the language of science and communication, English is presumably still considered to be more prestigious. To the extent that these assumptions regarding diglossia, even multiglossia, are correct language policy and language planning have to be adjusted to them appropriately.

1.2 QUESTIONS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study pertains to the linguistic situation of Indonesian as the national language of the Indonesian state alongside hundreds of regional languages and several dominant international ones (Sugono 2004). In this complex language situation, we need to convert policy outlines into programs and activities based on the findings and observations from in-depth studies on language attitudes in Indonesia and in the present study we have done so with respect to border areas.

It is important to study border areas in order to obtain a clear and true picture of the language attitudes of the communities there so that the linguistic measures needed are based on actual field conditions. The research was broad and comprised five provinces bordering four neighboring countries (Malaysia, Singapore, the Philippines, and Timor Leste).

Above we already mentioned that the provisional assumption was that the local language would have the least prestige compared to Indonesian and foreign languages while foreign languages would be more prestigious than the other two. To this end, the study endeavored to describe the border communities' language attitudes and the questions were broadly formulated as follows:

1. What is the language use of the border communities (Insular Riau, West Kalimantan, East Kalimantan, North Sulawesi and the Eastern

- Sunda Islands) with respect to local languages, Indonesian, and foreign languages, in the family, in society and in occupational domains?
- 2. What is the linguistic behaviour of border communities with respect to monitoring news, attention to language, and to language restrictions in the mass media?
- 3. What is the language attitude of border communities with respect to local languages, Indonesian and foreign languages?

The overall objective of the study was to find answers to these questions and to describe the research findings concerning (1) language usage; (2) language activities; and (3) societies' attitudes toward local languages, Indonesian, and foreign languages in border areas.

1.3 METHOD

The method used in this study was descriptive and quantitative. The research population consisted of border communities in five provinces which were heterogeneous with respect to social, economic, linguistic, religious, and ethnic-cultural aspects.² Purposive sampling was conducted based on four independent variables: gender, age, education, and occupation.³ In the provinces, 170 respondents were asked to fill in questionnaires.⁴ In this way, in each province there were on average 34 respondents who filled in 34 questionnaires each consisting of 35 questions about three dependent variables. The dependent variables were language use, language activities, and respondents' attitudes towards local languages, Indonesian, and foreign languages (Kori 2006; Ladegaard 2000).

The respondent's answers were calculated based on predefined scores scaled 1-5. After having been classified according to the four independent variables, the scores of the answers were tabulated. The next step was to calculate the number and percentage of each variable by using Microsoft Office Excel 2007.

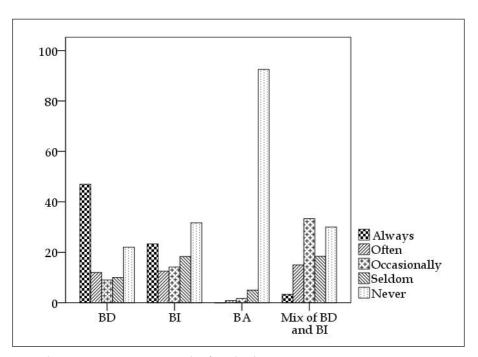
- This kind of heterogeneity is not only encountered among interregional or interprovincial communities. The population within one region or province can be very heterogeneous too because it can consist of various ethnicities. However, this heterogeneity is not taken as the basic principle of the sampling because the objective of this study was to discover the border societies' language attitudes seen from the aspects of gender, age, education, and occupation irrespective of the ethnic background of the population.
- From among these four, the occupation of the respondents needs some further explanation. Eight categories of occupations were used: farmer, fisherman, teacher, non-teaching Civil Servant, pupil, student, private sector, and entrepreneur. This means that in each study area there were four to five respondents in each category. Of course, from about 34 respondents for each research area there was a balance between the number of male and female respondents above and below 25 years of age and the duration of their education (no education/elementary education, secondary education, and higher education (diploma and graduate)).
- ⁴ After the respondents had been identified based on the criteria explained above and based on the population data from the village administration, they were requested to fill in questionnaires while the researcher waited for them to finish and guided them where necessary.

2 Languages attitude of Border Communities

In this part we will present the tabulations of the averages of the five border regions taken together.⁵ A generalization of the research findings follows.

2.1 Intensity of language use in the family domain

Three kinds of languages are used in the family domain: Local languages (BD), Indonesian (BI), and foreign languages (BA). A fourth language possibility is a mix between local language(s) and Indonesian. The frequency or intensity of language use could be indicated by *always*, *often*, *occasionally*, *seldom*, and *never*. Four targets of language use were questioned: that towards father/father-in-law, mother/mother-in-law, child, and sibling. The graphs below show the results of the tabulations of the answers. In this article we have refrained from including the independent variables that influence the dependent variables.⁶



Graph 1. Language usage in the family domain.

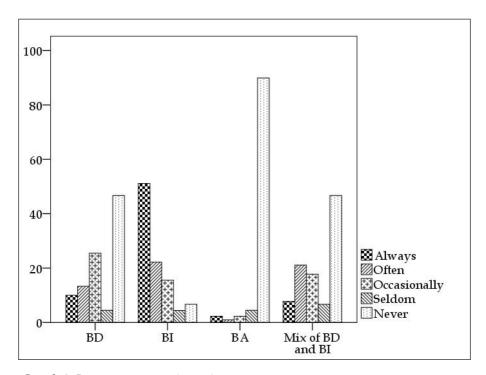
In graph 1, we see that almost 50% of the respondents *always* use BD when they talk to family members and 10% *often* use it in interfamily communication. About 10% of the respondents only *occasionally* or *seldom* use BD while 20% *never* use it.

⁵ We did this because the size of this article prevented us from presenting all the findings of our research for each region/province.

⁶ An analysis of the influence of the independent variables is given in the complete research report. In this brief article, we just present the generalizations for reasons of space, although it should be realized that the results of the analysis differ slightly from region to region.

In the family, the percentage of the use of Indonesian is not very high. It is even so that the percentage of those who *never* use Indonesian (more than 30%) is higher than that of those who *always* use it. 33% of the respondents answered that they *occasionally* use a mix of BD and BI and 18% *seldom* and 30% *never* do. Therefore, more respondents use BD as compared to BI (or a mix) and even less use BA.

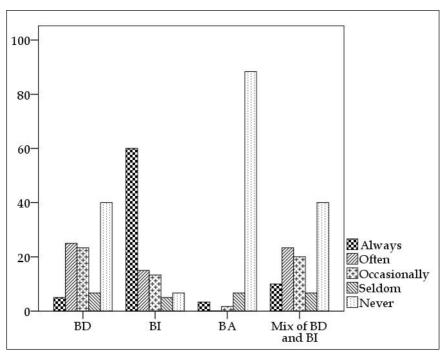
2.2 Intensity of Language use in society



Graph 2. Language usage in society.

Graph 2 shows that the use of BD in society is negative since only a small part of society (each around 10%) *always* or *often* use BD in society. Almost 50% stated *never* to use BD in the social domain. Conversely, more than 50% of the respondents stated that they *always* use BI. This means that in society, BI is used more often than the mix of BD and BI, the frequency of which is around 30% (*always* plus *often*). BA is used less than 10% with regional differences, for instance with regard to the use of Tagalog in North Sulawesi in Sangihe and Talaud.

2.3 INTENSITY OF LANGUAGE USE IN THE OCCUPATIONAL DOMAIN



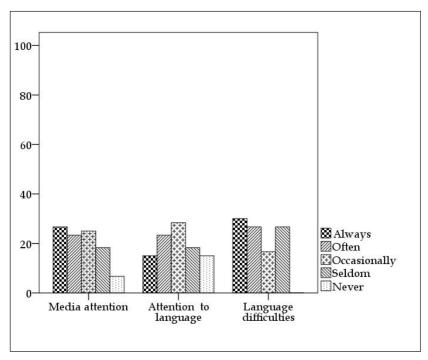
Graph 3. Language usage in the occupational domain.

Graph 3 shows that BI is used more often than BD, and much more often than BA. 60% claimed *always* to use BI in communication at work while only 5% stated to use BD. The mix of BD and BI is used rather frequently at 10% and more than 20% stated *often* to be in such a situation of diglossia. The graph also shows that around 2% of the respondents claimed *always* to use BA at work. Those who always use BA are employed in hotels or as tourist guides.

2.4 INTENSITY OF LANGUAGE ACTIVITIES IN THE MASS MEDIA

Graph 4 shows that 26% of the respondents stated *always* to read or to follow the news, whereas 24% said they *often* do so and only 25% just *occasionally*. 18% stated *seldom* and 6% *never* to follow the news in the mass media. From the total number of respondents (170), only 15% stated *always* to pay attention to the language the mass media uses; 24% *often*, 29% *occasionally* and 18% *seldom* mind the language that is being used. Moreover, 15% said they *never* took note of the language the mass media used.

As many as 30% of the respondents declared *always* to have difficulty reading the news in Indonesian, 27% *often* had trouble while 16% said *occasionally* to encounter problems when reading Indonesian news. Only 27% said that they *seldom* had trouble with the language used in the mass media. However, none of the respondents said that they *never* encountered difficulties. It seems that respondents predominantly had trouble with foreign terms, which, although already absorbed into Indonesian were still felt to be foreign.



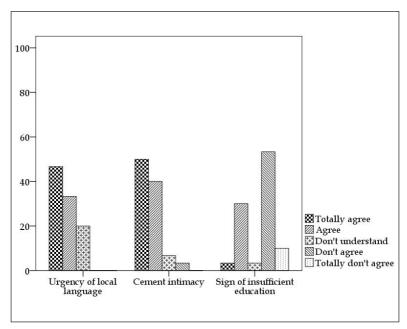
Graph 4. Language activities in the massmedia.

2.5 Language attitude toward local languages

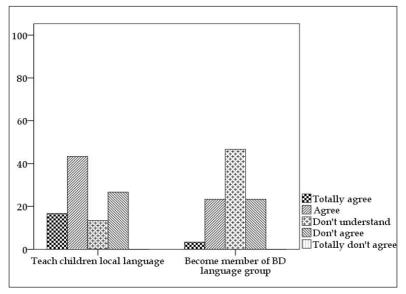
Of the seven questions that were asked in the questionnaires, we will only discuss five: the importance of BD in Indonesia's language constellation, BD's function as a means to cement intimacy and whether its use indicates backwardness. These questions concern society's attitude toward BD and whether it has prestige in their eyes or not. Two other questions concern people's willingness to teach their children to speak BD and their readiness to join BD groups if available.

Graph 5 indicates that all of the respondents thought that BD is important in the language constellation in Indonesia next to BI. As many as 48% of the respondents stated that it was very important and 32% thought it was important. This means that 80% thought that BD occupies an important position in Indonesia's language constellation. As much as 50% totally agreed that BD has a social function to cement intimacy and 40% of them agreed. Only 4% did not agree. Although only 4% totally agreed that the use of BD indicated backwardness and 52% did not agree and 34% agreed we need to be cautious because if the percentages change this may indicate that BD's existence is increasingly threatened. Consequently, BD will be used less and less and will be in danger to disappear when its speakers will abandon its use because they feel backward. From the 34%, as many as 26% said they would not agree if BD was to be taught to their children, as may be seen from graph 6 below. This is caused by the fact that mastering BD is seen as something natural and that children would automatically be able to use BD without having received instruction in the language. According to Rachman (2007), this indicates that

BD will become extinct or is in the process of disappearing. Graph 6 also reveals that as many as 29% of the respondents do *not agree* if they are forced to join a BD group. 47% had no opinion in this matter because in many regions this kind of groups did not exist. The only one in existence is in Insular Riau where the Malay Adat Association also engages in language guidance.

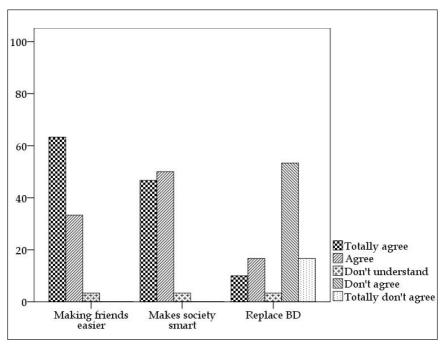


Graph 5. Attitudes toward BD: the importance of BD in the language constellation in Indonesia, cement intimacy, and indicates backwardness.



Graph 6. Attitudes towards BD to children and becoming member of BD groups.

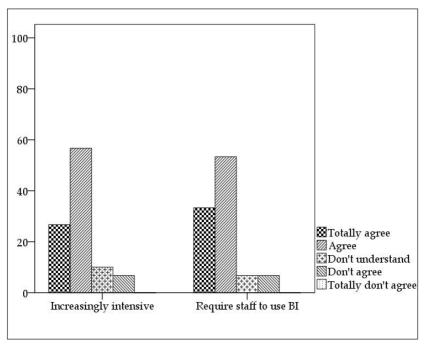
2.6 Language attitude toward Indonesian



Graph 7. Attitudes towards BI: facilitate companionship, sharpen society, and replace BD.

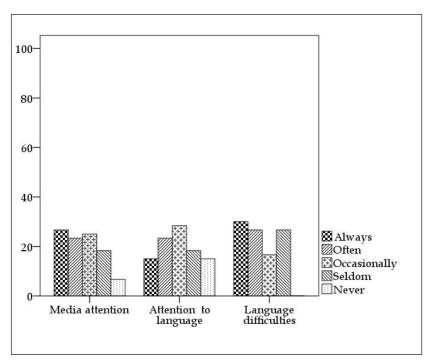
Graph 7 shows that respondents are positive toward BI. As many as 64% and 34% state they *totally agree* or *agree* with the statement that BI makes making friends more easy. None of the respondents did not agree. The outcome was similar with BI's role to sharpen society in border regions. As many as 98% stated that they *totally agreed* or *agreed*. None of the respondents did *not agree*. However, on the issue whether BI will push BD aside, 18% *agreed* and 10% *totally agreed*. Apparently, the positive attitude toward BI is bad news for BD's future. This is the more so because about 80% of the respondents stated that they more and more often used BI and that staff should be able to speak BI if they wanted to become superiors or civil servants,⁷ as revealed in graph 8.

Only 13% of the respondents were really civil servants (in the village or sub district administration a village head or section or subsection head). The percentage could reach 80% because the question asked in the questionnaire included the phrase "in case a respondent would become a superior or civil servant". This question served to test the attitude of respondents who might already hold a position. Interestingly, pupils and students (as the younger generation) stated that they totally agreed/agreed to intensify their use of BI and to require staff to use BI if they would be superiors or civil servants.



Graph 8. Attitudes toward BI: increasingly intensive and requiring staff to use BI.

2.7 ATTITUDE TOWARD FOREIGN LANGUAGES

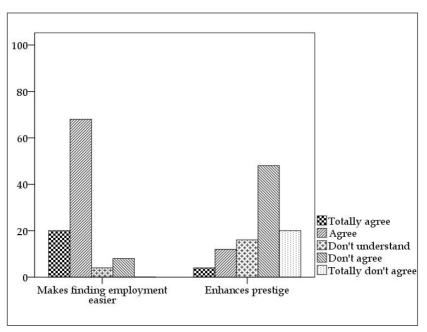


Graph 9. Attitudes toward BA: replacing BI and staff required to learn BA.

In this article, we only look critically at four questions. Will BA replace BI, should staff use BA when respondents were in leading positions or civil servants, should the use of BA make finding employment easier, and does the use of BA give prestige? The findings of the survey show the following facts.

Graph 9 shows that 3% of the respondents *totally agreed* and 22% *agreed* to the question "Will BA push BI aside?" These percentages are the same as those given to the idea that staff should be required to use BA because the respondents who answered question (a) were the same as those who answered question (b). A large number of respondents (53%) stated *not to agree* and 7% *totally not to agree*. Nevertheless, a disconcerting 28% feared for BI and BD's continued existence.

Graph 10 shows the answers of the respondents to two questions on their attitude toward BA. The first question concerned the notion that the use of BA would make finding a job easier and 89% of the respondents *agreed* to this idea. Only 8% stated that they did *not agree*. Conversely, to the question if the use of BA enhanced prestige, the respondents were more negative and 68% stated that they did *not agree*. Only 16% *agreed*. This negative attitude means that the respondents stand positive to the development of BI. The fact that they did not attach prestige to the use of BA means that they attach prestige to the use of BI. The higher the level of prestige attached to a language, the more positive society's attitude toward that language.



Graph 10. Attitude toward BA: BA makes it easy to find work and increases prestige.

⁸ These questions also included the supposition that respondents – especially those who were not teachers and non-teaching civil servants - had to use BA if they wanted to have leading positions or become civil servants.

3.1 CONCLUSION

The following three conclusions can be drawn from the discussion above. First, in the family, local languages are used more often than Indonesian or foreign languages. This means that local languages are used in non-formal situations and therefore only to a more limited extent (that is less than Indonesian) in the social domain outside the family. Especially in the occupational domain (that is, in typically formal situations), Indonesian is used more often than local or foreign languages. Second, border communities are actively engaged in finding news in the mass media, both printed and electronic. They also often pay attention to the language the mass media use. This is often because they face problems, among others, in the modern vocabulary the mass media use. Third, border communities have a positive attitude toward BD (agree/ totally agree) based on the answers to eight questions asked in connection with local languages. One question about whether the use of BD is a sign of backwardness was more answered by disagree / totally disagree. This means that the use of BD still has prestige in the eyes of border communities in family and non-formal social communication. However, we should be cautious of this because part of the respondents (30%) have a negative attitude toward BD (finding it backward to use BD and refuse to teach it to their children). If this attitude would be left unchallenged, BD's prestige will increasingly deteriorate over time. The language attitude of border communities towards BI is also positive (agree/totally agree) based on the answers to seven questions in connection with this language. This also indicates that BI has prestige in the eves of border communities, especially for use in formal communication (60 % stating that they always use BI). Their attitude toward BA is both positive and negative. They are positive toward the question whether proficiency in BA makes finding work easier and that staff should learn BA.

Their attitude was negative toward the question whether BA might replace BI and that BA increases one's prestige. This attitude actually shows their positive attitude toward BD and BI. This means that border communities' attitude toward BD and BI is still quite good. However, because a small number of respondents <code>agree/totally agree</code> with the possibility that BA may replace BI and because of their positive stance toward BA, programs have to be developed by the government agencies installed with linguistic tasks and responsibilities in order to re-instill positive attitudes toward BD and BI.

3.2 SUGGESTIONS

We would like to propose four suggestions. First, this research offers descriptive data in tabulation form and is just a first step. This means that it does not exclude the possibility for other researchers to carry out further statistical research of other aspects of the data presented here. Second, since the present research does not cover all the regions that border Indonesia's neighbouring countries it needs to be followed up by taking data from other provinces (for example, Papua that borders Papua Nugini). Third, research on language attitudes of non-border regions is equally important and needs

to be researched urgently. Fourth, the findings of this research can be used as the basis for language planning and guidance in border regions.

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QUESTIONNAIRE

(n = never, s = sometimes, o = occasionally, of = often, a = always)

I. Language usage

1. What language do you use when you t	alk to you	ır father/	father-in	-law?	
1. Indonesian	n	S	O	of	a
2. Local language	n	S	О	of	a
3. Foreign language (mention which)	n	S	O	of	a
4. Mix of 1 and 2	n	s	O	of	a
2. What language do you use when you t	alk to voi	ar mothe	r/mother	-in-law?	

1. Indonesian n s o of

1. IIIdonesian	11	5	U	OI	а
2. Local language	n	S	O	of	a

n	S	o	of	a			
n	S	О	of	a			
3. What language do you use when you talk to your children?							
n	s	O	of	a			
n	S	O	of	a			
n	S	O	of	a			
n	S	O	of	a			
4. What language do you use when you talk to your siblings?							
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n	s	O	of	a			
n	s	O	of	a			
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9. What language do you use when you talk to someone you just met?							
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II. Language activities

10. Do you read news/articles in newspapers/magazines?

- 1. Never
- 2. Seldom
- 3. Yes, occasionally

- 4. Yes, often
- 5. Yes, always
- 11. If yes, do you pay attention to the languages that is used?
- 1. Never
- 2. Seldom
- 3. Yes, occasionally
- 4. Yes, often
- 5. Yes, always
- 12. Do you ever have problems with the language the mass media use?
- 1. Never
- 2. Seldom
- 3. Yes, occasionally
- 4. Yes, often
- 5. Yes, always
- 13. Do you follow the news on radio/television?
- 1. Never
- 2. Seldom
- 3. Yes, occasionally
- 4. Yes, often
- 5. Yes, always
- 14. If yes, do you pay attention to the language that is used?
- 1. Never
- 2. Seldom
- 3. Yes, occasionally
- 4. Yes, often
- 5. Yes, always
- 15. Do you ever have problems with the language these mass media use?
- 1. Never
- 2. Seldom
- 3. Yes, occasionally
- 4. Yes, often
- 5. Yes, always
- III. Language attitude
- A. Attitude toward the local language
- 16. The local language occupies an important position next to Indonesian.
- 1. Totally disagree
- 2. Disagree
- 3. Don't know
- 4. Agree
- 5. Totally agree
- 17. The/a local language gives the impression of backwardness.
- 1. Totally disagree
- 2. Disagree
- 3. Don't know
- 4. Agree
- 5. Totally agree

- 18. The local language is richer (has more vocabulary and expressions so that it has more means to express ideas and feelings) compared to Indonesian.
- 1. Totally disagree
- 2. Disagree
- 3. Don't know
- 4. Agree
- 5. Totally agree
- 19. The local language is more beautiful than Indonesian.
- 1. Totally disagree
- 2. Disagree
- 3. Don't know
- 4. Agree
- 5. Totally agree
- 20. The local language can be used to tie bonds or as a means to cement friendship.
- 1. Totally disagree
- 2. Disagree
- 3. Don't know
- 4. Agree
- 5. Totally agree
- 21. I will teach my children the local language.
- 1. Totally disagree
- 2. Disagree
- 3. Don't know
- 4. Agree
- 5. Totally agree
- 22. I would become a member of a local language group if such a group exists.
- 1. Totally disagree
- 2. Disagree
- 3. Don't know
- 4. Agree
- 5. Totally agree
- B. Attitude toward Indonesian
- 23. Indonesian makes social intercourse easier.
- 1. Totally disagree
- 2. Disagree
- 3. Don't know
- 4. Agree
- 5. Totally agree
- 24. The use of Indonesian in the mass media strongly helps to make society smarter.
- 1. Totally disagree
- 2. Disagree
- 3. Don't know
- 4. Agree
- 5. Totally agree
- 25. In time Indonesian may replace the local language.
- 1. Totally disagree
- 2. Disagree
- 3. Don't know

- 4. Agree
- 5. Totally agree
- 26. Indonesian is more modern than the local language.
- 1. Totally disagree
- 2. Disagree
- 3. Don't know
- 4. Agree
- 5. Totally agree
- 27. Indonesian is more logical than the local language.
- 1. Totally disagree
- 2. Disagree
- 3. Don't know
- 4. Agree
- 5. Totally agree
- 28. I use Indonesian increasingly often.
- 1. Totally disagree
- 2. Disagree
- 3. Don't know
- 4. Agree
- 5. Totally agree
- 29. If I were a sub-regent/village head or civil servant, I would require my subordinates to use Indonesian.
- 1. Totally disagree
- 2. Disagree
- 3. Don't know
- 4. Agree
- 5. Totally agree
- C. Attitude toward foreign language
- 30. The/a foreign language makes it easier for me to find a job.
- 1. Totally disagree
- 2. Disagree
- 3. Don't know
- 4. Agree
- 5. Totally agree
- 31. The/a foreign language enhances my prestige.
- 1. Totally disagree
- 2. Disagree
- 3. Don't know
- 4. Agree
- 5. Totally agree
- 32. In time, the/a foreign language will replace Indonesian.
- 1. Totally disagree
- 2. Disagree
- 3. Don't know
- 4. Agree
- 5. Totally agree

- 33. The/a foreign language has a richer vocabulary than Indonesian.
- 1. Totally disagree
- 2. Disagree
- 3. Don't know
- 4. Agree
- 5. Totally agree
- 34. The/a foreign language is more modern than Indonesian.
- 1. Totally disagree
- 2. Disagree
- 3. Don't know
- 4. Agree
- 5. Totally agree
- 35. If I were a sub-regent/village head or civil servant, I would require my subordinates to learn foreign languages.
- 1. Totally disagree
- 2. Disagree
- 3. Don't know
- 4. Agree
- 5. Totally agree