

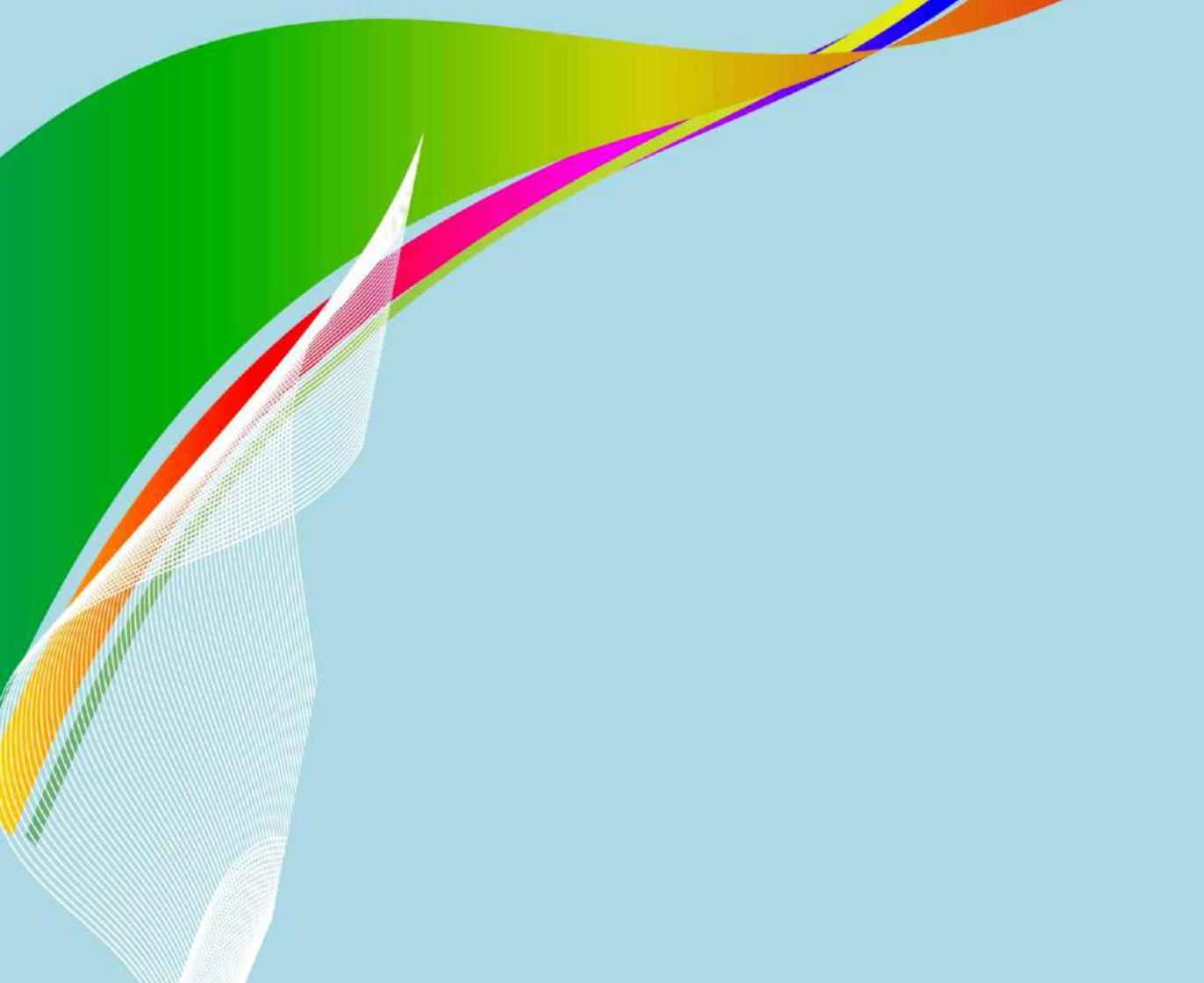
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**Language, Youth, and Cultural Identity: Study on the Inheritance
of Javanese Speech Levels among Teenagers in Yogyakarta**

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LANGUAGE, YOUTH, AND CULTURAL IDENTITY: STUDY ON THE INHERITANCE OF JAVANESE SPEECH LEVELS AMONG TEENAGERS IN YOGYAKARTA

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Abstract

This study aims to discover how Javanese speech levels are inherited and learned by teenagers in Kotabaru, Yogyakarta, as well as the role of families and schools in internalizing this cultural heritage. The study also investigates how teenagers in Yogyakarta use Javanese as a marker of their cultural identity. The Javanese language is used in daily interaction and communication by native Javanese speakers in Central Java, East Java, and Yogyakarta. This article used a qualitative method with an ethnography of communication approach. The authors collected data by conducting field observations and interviewing teenagers in Kotabaru as informants. This study found that the role of teachers at school is more dominant in the inheritance and understanding of Javanese speech levels to teenagers compared to the role of parents at home. The knowledge and skills of the Javanese speech level of teenagers in Yogyakarta mostly use “ngoko” Javanese in daily communication with people in the family and neighborhood. Despite experiencing difficulties in learning and using the Javanese speech level, teenagers in Yogyakarta still consider the Javanese speech level as a form of their cultural identity as Javanese. The process of inheritance and internalization of the Javanese language requires the involvement of family and community, in addition to schools, in shaping the significance of the Javanese language as a cultural identity.

Keywords: Cultural Identity; Language Knowledge; Javanese; Teenagers; Communication.

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A. Introduction

Yogyakarta, recognized as a center of Javanese culture, exhibits unique characteristics that distinguish it from other regions in Indonesia. Yogyakarta Province has Special status with the recognition of the Yogyakarta Palace as an inseparable part of the provincial government of the Yogyakarta Special Region. Yogyakarta is also a miniature Indonesia where almost everyone from various ethnic groups is in this city. Javanese is the mother tongue, the identity of the people of Yogyakarta, and is an element of Javanese culture (Farikah et al., 2022). In several activities, Javanese has become a medium for communication within the family, daily interactions in the community, traditional ceremonies such as death, bridal, and circumcision ceremonies, as well as various meetings of Javanese people (Isodarus, 2020).

As a mother tongue, Javanese is a regional language with the most significant number of speakers in Indonesia, with more than 75 million speakers (Suharyo & Nurhayati, 2020). Javanese is used in daily interaction and communication by both native Javanese speakers and immigrant speakers who live in the Central Java, East Java, and Yogyakarta regions. In Javanese, there are levels or language structures used according to the level of the person speaking. The “Javanization” political movement in the New Order Era for 32 years has spread the Javanese culture around Indonesia’s region with a transmigration program (Elmhirst, 2000).

According to Geertz (2014), the Javanese language features five speech levels that reflect social status: *krama inggil* (i.e., high styleme and high honorifics); *krama biasa* (high styleme without honorifics); *krama madya* (middle styleme without honorifics); *ngoko madya* (middle styleme with low honorifics); and *ngoko biasa* (low styleme, no honorifics) (Geertz, 2014). The level *ngoko* shows the boundless relationship between people who speak, such as close friends or teachers and their students. Meanwhile, the level of *krama* shows a very respectful manner and reluctance, which is used when a child speaks to parents or teachers (Poedjosoedarmo et al., 2013), and there are two critical factors in deciding the degree of speech. Firstly, the level of formality in individual relationships determines the choice of *ngoko*, *madya*, and *krama*



levels, which are chosen according to the social status of the interlocutor. The high-low aspect of an interlocutor's social status in the Javanese language determines the usage of *krama inggil* words (Azila & Febriani, 2021).

Language is the most effective communication tool accessible to humans (Kijko, 2016). According to Wierzbicka (1997) in Gladkova and Larina (2018), culture manifests itself in language in various ways. Culture can be seen as the way of living in a community providing guidelines for localized ways of thinking and acting (Gladkova & Larina, 2018). Spencer-Oatey (2012) defined *culture* as a series of attitudes, beliefs, norms, and basic assumptions, as well as the fundamental values shared by a group of people that shape their behavior (Spencer-Oatey, 2012). Language becomes a significant productive machine in the process of culture identification (Khurana et al., 2023).

Language serves as a tool for self-identification, enabling individuals or groups to express their identity in unique ways (Octoveria & Munandar, 2024). Language can be used to identify or show someone's identity (Ashrapova et al., 2019). Edward (2009) in (Owen, 2011) further argues that language, in its symbolic role, acts as a group's symbolic and psychosocial meeting point. This underscores the deep connection between language and culture. Building on the work of Michel Foucault, this research will explore how language and culture are both institutionalized (Foucault, 2008) and, as a result, cultural subjectivities and identities are performatively produced (Wiley & Wise, 2019).

Language and culture thus act as a platform for the interaction between individuals and their resultant cultural identity. Benjamin Lee Whorf (1956) explained that language is rooted in culture, whereas different linguistic societies encounter difficulty differently. Language is also used in society to arrange the cognitive structure of language users and is used as a platform to identify oneself (Subbiondo, 2005). Language identifies or shows someone's personal and cultural identity regarding gender, age, and nativity. Individuals' style of speaking has become the characteristic called "ideoiek" (Malmkjear, 1991) cited from (Santoso, 2017).



Language becomes the sign of ethnical identity through which individuals identify with a specific social unit. Cultural identity is considered a complex notion that encompasses a collective memory of one's family, community, nation, and ancestral history, which refers to customs, traditions, beliefs, and values that construct a person's sense of belonging (Darginavičienė, 2023). In the context of language and cultural identity, it is assumed that teenagers in Yogyakarta no longer use Javanese speech levels in everyday life even though they identify themselves as Javanese. This is the starting point of this research, so it is necessary to identify and analyze how teenagers in Yogyakarta learn, understand, and use Javanese speech levels in everyday life.

Warschauer (2001), cited from (Cumming, 2012), declared that language has always played an essential role in shaping and expressing identity. Language plays a role in our expression of identity and has enabled human creativity. Cultural identity confirms the relationship between cultural belonging and the identity of individuals and national groups (Zhang & Su, 2023). According to Friedman (1994), cultural identity refers to social identity based on specific cultural configurations of consciousness. History, language, and race are the basis for forming cultural identity and building social reality (Nugroho et al., 2021). Stuart Hall gave us a way of understanding cultural identity as distinct aspects of our identity that appear from the sense of belonging to ethnic, racial, linguistic, religious, and national culture (Hall, 2019).

Research related to language that plays a vital role in maintaining and expressing culture was conducted by Hartanti et al., in 2018 entitled *Regional Language Preservation and Shift in Pentingsari Village Community*, which finds social phenomena and symptoms in society through direct interactive activities (Hartanti et al., 2019). Hartati et al., research focuses on the use of the Javanese language among rural communities, which is the main factor that plays a role in maintaining Javanese culture. Research from Nugroho and Kusuma (2023) examined the use of Banyumasan Javanese dialect among students from Banyumas in Bandung City, who found that the use of



Banyumasan Javanese language was carried out by students flexibly adjusted to the interlocutor. The consistent use of the Banyumasan Ngapak dialect shapes the Banyumasan Javanese cultural identity (Nugroho & Kusuma, 2023). Research from Wiranti et al., (2018) states that children's morals must be built early to develop optimally, starting from behavioral habits and spoken words. The Javanese *Krama* language is one of the foundations for building early childhood moral development (Wiranti et al., 2018).

Hartanti et al., research only focused on a tiny village in Central Java. It did not use a specific qualitative approach. The results of Hartanti et al., research are limited to the community using Javanese in daily life, and there is a need to explain whether there is a process of Javanese language inheritance to the younger generation. The research from Nugroho and Kusuma only focused on using the Ngapak Javanese dialect by student groups in Bandung City. It did not analyze how they got the cultural heritage in the form of the Ngapak dialect. Meanwhile, Wiranti et al., study focuses on using children's *Krama* level of Javanese speech in a community group. It does not examine how the children preserve Javanese's speech level.

This research is a comprehensive exploration of how Javanese is used by teenagers in urban areas in everyday life, particularly in the home and school environment. The study meticulously examines the role of family and school in inheriting and internalizing the Javanese language to the younger generation in Yogyakarta. The researchers have taken great care in analyzing and understanding the role of Javanese language education in shaping and developing Javanese cultural identity. This research seeks to reveal how teenagers in Kotabaru, Yogyakarta, inherited and knew the level of Javanese speech and whether family and school have a role in the inheritance and internalization of the Javanese language. The researchers also examine how teenagers interpret the Javanese language as a cultural identity. The researchers expected to contribute to the development of cultural communication studies, particularly in the internalization and socialization of cultural heritage and the inheritance of local languages around the world.



B. Method

The qualitative method used in this research is the ethnography of communication studies approach. This research reveals the role of language in a society's communicative behavior, focusing on how language is used in societies with different cultures (Hymes, 2004). According to Gumperz (1984), Hymes (1987), Duranti (1988), and Sville-Troike (2003), from an ethnographer's perspective, linguistic, interactional, and cultural phenomena must ultimately be taken into account in an adequate description and explanation of communication competence (Sville-Troike, 2003). Three indicators determine communicative competence: linguistic knowledge, interaction skills, and cultural knowledge.

The research collected data using listening, conversational engagement, fishing, and transcription techniques, which were documented by recording techniques. The researchers directly observed the field by observing the teenage community using Javanese and taking notes and documentation. Data acquisition was also conducted by conducting unstructured interviews with several informants related to this research. The eavesdropping technique becomes a crucial data collection technique in this research. The researchers listened to whatever could be heard without asking the research subject to discuss it.

The subject of this research is a speech community consisting of teenagers who are native Javanese of Yogyakarta who live in Kotabaru Village, Gondokusuman Subdistrict, and have a family background that comes from the Javanese culture of Yogyakarta. The teenage community group in Kotabaru village became the research subject considering that, based on the initial observation of the study, they are a relatively diverse community of economic and social status and still use Javanese in daily social interactions in the home and school environment.

Researchers conducted participant observations between March 2023 and April 2024. As participant observers, we meticulously observed and recorded people's way of life, taking an emic (folk or inside) and etic (analytic or outside) approach to describe communities and cultures (Fetterman, 2010).



Our ethnographic notes are descriptive with a high level of detail and interpretive to determine the significance of what is observed (Grey, 2004). This ethnography of communication research uses three data collection methods: observation, interviews, and document study. In carrying out this participant observation, we, as researchers, actively engaged with the community and discovered facts related to teenagers' use of Javanese. The profile of teenage members of the Kotabaru speech community is described in Table 1.

Table 1. Kotabaru speech community member

Informant	Gender	Age	Initial	Characteristics
1	F	17	Dina	Senior High School student
2	M	17	Udin	Senior High School student
3	M	18	Fajar	Senior High School student
4	F	16	Bunga	Junior High School student
5	M	16	Argya	Junior High School student
6	M	16	Bagus	Junior High School student
7	M	16	Timothy	Junior High School student
8	M	15	Sohan	Junior High School student
9	F	67	Mrs. Sri	Grandmother of the teenager, Retired lecturer.
10	F	51	Mrs. A	Mother of teenager

After collecting research data from observations, interviews, and documentation, researchers took the processing and preparing the data for analysis. The next step is reading and coding the data and then making descriptions and interpretations in qualitative reports. These stages of data processing are carried out to ensure the validity of the research data. Mears (2017) argues that the validity of interview research is related to its appropriateness for studying what it claims to inform and its integrity in reporting.

To ensure validity, the researcher allowed the research informants to read the analysis results and provide feedback if any data did not match after the description and interpretation of the data. In qualitative research, reliability is challenging because no statistical tests are available for this purpose (Sutton & Austin). Reliability in qualitative research is often called



consistency in data collection methods and sources (Arksey & Knight, 1999; Coleman, 2022). Even Stenbacka (2001) and Golafshani (2003) argue that because reliability concerns measurement, it has no relevance in assessing the quality of qualitative research. Therefore, if qualitative research uses reliability, then the consequence is that the research could be better.

C. Result and Discussion

In this study, researchers interviewed several teenagers in Kotabaru to obtain data on the use and inheritance of Javanese. To complement the research data, the research team also gathered information from schoolteachers and parents to get comprehensive data related to the inheritance of Javanese speech levels to teenagers in Yogyakarta.

1. Result

Based on field observations, the phenomenon of using Javanese in Yogyakarta as a regional language among Yogyakarta teenagers is assumed to be starting to erode due to several fundamental factors, starting from the lack of control or habituation on the part of the family to use Javanese according to the level of excellent and correct Javanese speech, and several other external factors. Javanese in formal education is implemented in Javanese language subjects from elementary to high school, and it is the mother tongue and a symbol and identity of Javanese culture. However, based on observations, Javanese is a regional language that is difficult for teenagers in Yogyakarta to master and learn by applying a level of speech that has special meaning historically and for its speakers.

Yogyakarta teenagers in Kotabaru mostly use *ngoko*, or the lowest level of Javanese, in their daily interactions at school and home. The use of *ngoko* level Javanese is considered to ignore the use of Javanese speech levels, which can also eliminate their cultural identity. Teenagers in Kotabaru still try to use the *krama* language when dealing with older people, such as parents, grandparents, and teachers at school. Urban life in Kotabaru is undeniably one of the decisive environments in the inheritance of the Javanese language, considered one of the most critical aspects of Javanese culture.



a. Javanese Speech Level Difficulties

As the ethnic group with the largest population in Indonesia, Javanese people are spread not only across the island of Java but almost throughout Indonesia. As a region with a majority Javanese population, Yogyakarta is one of the centers of Javanese culture, where the Javanese language is not just a means of communication but also a cultural and social identity. According to the Yogyakarta Special Region Culture Service in the article Guidelines for the Preservation and Development of Javanese Language and Literature (2014), the Javanese language is also at the forefront of conveying the vision and mission of Javanese culture and its existence as a noble culture, namely a culture that consists of the complexity of beauty and carries the mandate of noble character. The level of *ngoko-krama* speech in Javanese society has four functions, namely (a) as social norms in society, (b) as a high-quality system, (c) to express respect and familiarity, and (d) as a regulator of social distance. Concerning the development of power, which also involves consolidating the position, the fourth function is regulating social distance.

In everyday life, Javanese is divided into three levels of speech, namely *ngoko*, *madya*, and *krama*, which can indicate a person's social class. The level of *ngoko* speech reflects a sense of distance between two people speaking, for example, between close friends or a teacher's speech to students. Intermediate speech level or intermediate level shows politeness even though it is only moderate, for example, when talking to ordinary older people. Meanwhile, the level of polite speech shows the whole meaning of politeness and a feeling of reluctance. With this level of Javanese speech, most teenagers in Kotabaru need help learning and understanding Javanese. Almost all teenagers who became research informants said they only mastered a small vocabulary of Javanese *krama* because it was difficult to understand and practice in daily interactions in the home and school environment. As Bagus, Timothy, and Argya stated:

"It is tough to learn and use Javanese speech levels, especially the Krama level because there is a fear of being wrong in pronunciation" (Interview with informan Bagus, Timothy, and Argya in January 2024).

Sohan, another informant, demonstrated proficiency in *krama* and frequently served as a Master of Ceremonies at local events. According to Sohan, *"I learned Javanese krama not only at school but also by paying attention when my parents and people in the neighborhood interact and speak Javanese Krama"* (Interview with informant Sohan in February 2024). This reality shows that there are still teenagers in Yogyakarta City who can understand and practice the Krama language in everyday life, even though this level of speech is quite challenging to learn.

The inheritance of the level of Javanese speech needs attention from stakeholders in the inheritance of Javanese speech levels as one of the country's cultural heritages. The Education Office of Yogyakarta City and Yogyakarta Special Region Province, Javanese language teachers, academics, and parents should work together so that teenagers are willing and able to learn Javanese speech levels. Another thing that needs to be done is to consider Yogyakarta as a cultural center where Javanese plays a vital role in daily life, not only as a means of communication but also as a carrier of cultural values and identity. Some of the above can provide a comprehensive approach for teenagers in Yogyakarta to understand Javanese as a linguistic system and an essential element of cultural identity and social hierarchy.

b. Javanese inheritance in school and home environment

The level of Javanese speech is related to aspects of belief and religion, where its use is closely related to respect for community leaders and religious leaders, so its inheritance is also related to the structures that occur in society. In the school environment, the Javanese language inheritance process is carried out by implementing a local content curriculum with Javanese language subjects implemented in the Local Content Curriculum of Javanese Language. The results of field observations and interviews with informants found several obstacles in learning and inheriting the Javanese language in schools.



As a local content subject, Javanese still needs a structured and systematic textbook, so teenagers struggle to learn the material in Javanese language lessons. These teenagers in Kotabaru admitted that they had difficulty understanding the level of Javanese speech because it was rarely used in daily interactions. They only memorize some Javanese vocabulary at the “manners” level, which is often used to show politeness, such as *maturnuwun* (thank you), *kulonuwun* (excuse me), *inggih* (yes), and *mboten* (no). According to them, they can master these words because they are often said in daily interactions with older people at school and home.

In the context of this research, teachers in Yogyakarta also have a vital role in inheriting and maintaining the level of Javanese speech as a local cultural heritage. Another obstacle in the inheritance of Javanese speech levels is the need for more Javanese to be used in daily interactions in the school and home environment. Of the eight school student informants in this study, three rarely use Javanese to communicate at home and more often use Indonesian. According to the informants, it is quite difficult for them to understand the knowledge related to Javanese speech levels. As stated by informants Udin, Dina, and Fajar, who received Javanese language lessons from elementary to high school, the most difficult level of Javanese speech to understand is the *krama* level of speech because it is rarely used in daily conversations. As Udin said:

“When I was little, I didn’t know whether it was ngoko or krama, but my parents told me to use this kind of language (krama) when speaking to my elders. But I only learned the difference between krama and ngoko in elementary school”. (Interview with Udin in June 2023).

The use of Javanese speech is also influenced not only by the inner family (nuclear family only) but also by the extended family (grandparents). It is also known that the progress of implementation is also driven by the efforts of power differences in the family that make informants more intense in empowering Javanese speech (*krama*). However, there is a different opinion from the parents of teenagers who became research informants that the use of *ngoko* language in the home environment does not come from

direct learning from others such as parents and grandparents, but individuals, especially teenagers, conduct personal studies in understanding the social context that occurs in their social environment. This habituation becomes a habit and familiarity found in the settlement. Internal family factors do not have a significant tendency to influence the level of speech-language use but are oriented heavily on external factors (environment).

Ngoko-level Javanese speech is a relevant option used by the surrounding community, especially teenagers in Kotabaru, Yogyakarta, to communicate daily. The informants have a filter bubble built by their parents (mothers). They are separated from the culture in their environment, so efforts are made by making the informants have a routine to bring up the potential to blend in with the new social environment. The difficulty of teenagers in understanding Javanese speech levels needs to be a concern for schools and parents to provide lessons and understanding related to the use of Javanese speech levels to teenagers so that it can continue to be sustainable. This willingness to learn and use Javanese shows the willingness of young people to openly identify with their parents' ethnicity and use Javanese in their daily lives.

From the narrative of teenagers in Kotabaru, they still have a sense of belonging and pride in their Javanese cultural identity even though they cannot master the level of Javanese speech well. Teenagers also try to use Javanese *krama* to show manners, although it is still constrained to certain words and situations. Teachers should focus on making these concepts more accessible and relevant, perhaps by incorporating practical exercises and examples that resonate with students' social contexts. It is necessary to create supportive learning environments at home and school where students feel encouraged to practice and experiment with different levels of speech without fear of judgment or failure.

2. Discussion

Through observations and interviews with teenagers, teachers, and parents of students in Yogyakarta regarding efforts to empower the use of Javanese speech levels, it was found that internal factors hinder the consistent



implementation of these Javanese levels. There is an analysis that internal factors hamper the implementation of speech, and even today, Javanese is still used as one of the daily languages of Surinamese citizens who come from Java (Hoefte & Mingoen, 2022). After conducting participant observation and in-depth interviews, the authors found that the informant has an affected orientation in empowering language speech. In this case, the external environment plays a role in the intensity of teenagers' communication outside the internal environment (family). However, it does not rule out the reality that internal factors also have an unexpected influence in encouraging consistency for teenagers in empowering phrases using language levels according to context and interlocutors.

a. Linguistic knowledge and skills of Javanese speech levels

Knowledge related to the level of Javanese speech is obtained by teenagers in Yogyakarta from the school environment by learning the local content of Javanese Language and Literature. Teachers at school teach that Javanese speech levels are used to respect elders and show courtesy. According to the informants, it is difficult for them to understand the knowledge related to Javanese speech levels. Although students' linguistic knowledge is weak, they can use specific strategies to overcome difficulties (Razi & Grenfell, 2012). In addition, the help of linguistic intelligence learning design has improved students' language skills (Gunawan et al., 2022).

As stated by informants who received Javanese language lessons from elementary to high school, the most challenging level of Javanese speech to understand is the *krama* level of speech because it is rarely used in daily conversations. This finding aligns with Cohen et al. (2024) findings, which suggest that higher exposure to a language at home and school does not necessarily equate to higher-order skills in that language. High-level skills are found in languages with quantitatively lower but qualitatively rich exposure (Cohen et al., 2024).

Javanese language knowledge in the home environment is mainly obtained from the neighborhood. Based on direct observation, people in the



home environment more often use the lowest level of Javanese speech (*ngoko*). The level of use of this *ngoko* level empowers phrases that are implemented into segments of all ages so that the *ngoko* language is contextualized as *ngoko kasar* (low styleme, no honorifics). The discovery of this information indicates that the knowledge of the *ngoko* language in urban settlements, such as Kotabaru Yogyakarta, comes from direct learning conducted by others. However, these teenagers also conduct personal studies to understand the social context in their social environment. This habituation becomes a habit and commonality found in the settlement.

All teenage informants said that the knowledge related to the level of Javanese speech obtained from school is practically used in daily interaction and communication at home and in their neighborhoods. However, the knowledge of the Javanese language *ngoko* is more widely absorbed and used in daily conversations with family members and the community around the settlement. The lack of Javanese language use in the school and home environment also causes a lack of knowledge about Javanese speech levels among teenagers. Informants said they mostly use Indonesian in interaction and communication at school because some friends also lack Javanese language skills. In the home and neighborhood environment, not all family members and neighbors always use Javanese, especially since the Javanese language *krama* is very rarely used in daily interactions. As Coquet (2005) states, constructing a narrative requires the appropriate use of language as a means of communication, which is a question of using language in a particular situation and considering the interlocutor and the context of the interaction (Broc et al., 2021).

Despite the lack of knowledge and skills related to Javanese speech levels, the teenagers in Yogyakarta said they had pride in the Javanese language and culture. From the interviews involving teenage informants in Yogyakarta, it is known that they still love their culture, especially the Javanese language. This shows that limited knowledge and skills in using Javanese speech levels, especially Javanese *krama*, do not make these teenage informants abandon Javanese in socializing in public and at school.



Community-based initiatives could promote a broader understanding and appreciation of Javanese cultural heritage among teenagers, reinforcing their pride in the language despite its complexities. These steps aim to bridge the gap between formal education and everyday practice, fostering a more profound cultural connection and proficiency in Javanese speech levels among teenagers in Yogyakarta.

b. The Level of Javanese speech as cultural identity

The shaping and developing cultural identity with the Javanese language in Yogyakarta predominantly occurs in the home and school environment. Javanese is a crucial subject in the Yogyakarta curriculum for teenagers (students) and plays a significant role in elementary to middle school education (middle and high school). In the Javanese language, hierarchy is used based on the status of interlocutors. As part of the culture's identity, the Javanese language also houses important social identity markers. The complex systems of speech levels, as they become internalized to perform a critical socialization process for the Javanese culture, became one of the main factors in the inheritance of the Javanese language, especially for kids and teenagers. The relationship between multilingualism and cultural identity is not simple because culture is dynamic and encourages language differences between generations and within generations (Darginavičienė, 2023; Popescu & Pudelko, 2024). Changes in the use of the mother tongue occur as they speak to fit the changing reality.

Despite being exposed to information technology communication and globalization processes, adolescents in Yogyakarta are expected to use Javanese as the core of their cultural identity. The environment at home and peer association at school support and reinforce the use of Javanese as the primary marker of the cultural identity of adolescents in Yogyakarta. The inheritance of the Javanese language as part of Javanese culture cannot be separated from the three main aspects of Javanese society, especially Yogyakarta, namely Javanese culture, beliefs, and religion (Nofrima et al., 2021). In the context of global culture, the inheritance and use of local



languages are challenges for interconnected communities in maintaining the richness of local culture (Armia et al., 2023; Nofrima et al., 2021).

Given Yogyakarta's position as the cultural center of Java and its reputation as a miniature version of Indonesia, preserving the Javanese language not only enriches local identity but also significantly contributes to global diversity. In the context of rapid globalization, local languages and cultures like Javanese offer unique and essential perspectives that complement the global narrative on diversity and interconnection. By maintaining the Javanese language, the people of Yogyakarta not only preserve their cultural heritage but also affirm the importance of plurality and intercultural dialogue in the face of cultural homogenization by global influences (Hidayatullah & Hidayanto, 2023; Rafiek & Effendi, 2022). Therefore, the sustainability of the Javanese language can be seen as a crucial effort in maintaining cultural uniqueness in the face of global cultural competition and dominance, providing valuable lessons on cultural resilience and adaptation in the era of globalization.

Moreover, the Javanese language, with its speech levels intricately tied to speakers' status and social identity, plays a pivotal role in guiding behavior. The very choice of words, phrases, and sentences in the Javanese language adheres to the rules and norms of Javanese society, thereby shaping social interactions. This is evident in the stark contrast in language use by students when conversing with parents, relatives, friends, or teachers at school. A profound understanding and experience are prerequisites for using the Javanese language daily and establishing a social identity (Ayuningtias & Ekawati, 2024). As a significant determinant of social identity, Javanese language usage immediately reflects an individual's social class; for instance, individuals from lower social classes exhibit a distinct speech style compared to those from higher social strata.

This nuanced use of the Javanese language reinforces social hierarchies and fosters a sense of belonging and community among its speakers. As individuals navigate their social environments, they adjust their speech to align with the expected societal norms, demonstrating respect and



understanding of their place within the community (Ariftha & Azhar, 2023). This linguistic adaptability is crucial in a globalizing world where maintaining cultural identity becomes challenging (Aulia et al., 2023). The ability to switch between different levels of Javanese language depending on the context is a testament to the resilience of Javanese culture amidst external influences. It highlights the dynamic nature of the language as a living, breathing aspect of Javanese heritage that evolves yet retains its intrinsic values. Thus, the Javanese language serves not only as a medium of communication but also as a powerful tool for cultural preservation and social cohesion.

Learning the local content of the Javanese language and literature at school is about ethics and manners, a simple process for children. Teachers at school instill in children the ethics that when talking to older people, the attitude should be how, then simple language utterances such as *maturnuwun* (thank you), *nyuwun pangapunten* (sorry), and *nderek langkung* (excuse me) must be understood as a form of respect. Culturing ethics with this language is one of the character buildings of cultural identity in teenagers in Yogyakarta. The teachers, parents, and grandmother who became research informants agreed that in the home environment, it is challenging to monitor the learning of high-level Javanese language (*krama*) and understanding of attitudes and manners. This finding aligns with the results of research from Wiranti et al., (2018), which convey that through the habituation of Javanese manners, children will get used to respecting the interlocutor, respecting their elders, and loving their peers from an early age.

Attitude learning these teenagers towards a particular language can contribute to understanding one's social identity because the expression of attitudes is part of the group formation process and is part of social belonging (Pan et al., 2021). The difficulty experienced in mastering the knowledge and skills of the Javanese speech level as a mother tongue makes Javanese seem like a second language after Indonesian. As conducted by Wang (2021) found that the inadequacy of the language determines proficiency in mastering a second language to accommodate freedom of expression. The teenagers in Yogyakarta in this study were less able to use Javanese speech levels. They



were also related to fear of making mistakes in choosing and using words or sentences to express their thoughts or opinions.

The lack of direct and realistic social context in language use also affects language understanding and mastery (Wang, 2021). In this case, the Javanese language spoken by teenagers in Yogyakarta is considered less able to represent the social context of teenagers who tend to choose to use spoken language or “slang” in Indonesian. However, teenagers in Yogyakarta are still trying to understand and use Javanese according to the social context to maintain their cultural identity. Learning Javanese is inseparable from the culture of the Yogya people, who are always *andap asor* (humble). Teenagers at school are always given the understanding that when they use the Javanese word *krama*, it means they are humble in front of their elders. By studying language and culture, it is hoped that teenagers will also understand cultural identity.

Based on the insights gathered about the cultural identity and language use among teenagers in Yogyakarta, several actionable steps can be proposed to enhance their understanding and proficiency in the Javanese language. The steps are to strengthen the integration of Javanese language and literature into the elementary through high school curriculum. This includes theoretical knowledge and practical applications of speech levels like “*krama*” in daily interactions. Implementing the level of Javanese speech should be done through more practical exercises and scenarios in classrooms that reflect real-life situations where different speech levels are appropriate. This could help students better internalize the complexities of the Javanese speech hierarchy. To strengthen the sense of belonging to the Javanese language as a cultural identity, it is necessary to foster community-based initiatives that encourage using Javanese in everyday environments outside of school.

D. Conclusion

The Javanese language, comprising three levels, *ngoko*, *madya*, and *krama*, poses significant challenges for teenagers in Yogyakarta in comprehending and applying it effectively. From the findings and discussion,



teachers at school have a more substantial role in instilling and understanding the various levels of Javanese language in adolescents than parents at home. This teacher's role is because most teenagers gain knowledge and skills in the Javanese language at the level of tutor krama from the subjects taught by teachers at school. In Yogyakarta, teenagers mostly use *ngoko* level Javanese in daily communication with family members and people in the neighborhood. The rarity of the 'krama' level of Javanese speech as a form of teaching manners has implications for the reduced respect for older interlocutors taught in Javanese culture.

The process of inheriting Javanese speech levels among teenagers in Kotabaru, Yogyakarta, plays a crucial role in shaping and preserving Javanese cultural identity. The home environment, friendship, and school environment are factors in using Javanese as a cultural identity in Yogyakarta. The process of inheritance and internalization of the Javanese language requires the role of family and social environment as well as the role of formal education, namely schools, to shape the meaning of the Javanese language as a cultural identity. With the decreasing use of the Javanese speech level 'krama' level, the Javanese language identity will shift with most speakers' use of the Javanese language *ngoko*.

Several suggestions were obtained related to the inheritance of Javanese speech levels to teenagers in Yogyakarta, including providing continuous professional development for teachers to improve their pedagogical methods in teaching Javanese language that engages students and makes learning relevant to their cultural identity. In learning the Javanese language in schools, it is necessary to develop digital resources and tools that complement traditional teaching methods, including interactive lessons, multimedia content, and mobile applications. The results of this study can be an input in the inheritance of local languages (mother tongue) in a broader context. Local languages in Indonesia and around the world face the same threats regarding dwindling speakers due to globalization, so more in-depth studies related to local language inheritance need to be carried out in different places.



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