

## Loving Your Grandparents: Family Relationship in Shaping Language Policy

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### ABSTRACT

This study explores the influence of family relationships on family language policies and the preservation of local languages within the multilingual context of Samarinda, Indonesia. Utilizing Bourdieu's concept of social capital, the research focuses on three families chosen through purposive sampling to ensure relevance to the study's objectives. The participants include grandparents, parents, and children, selected based on their diverse linguistic background and their active engagement in intergenerational language transmission. The sample was designed to understand how emotional bonds and intergenerational interactions impact children's language proficiency and aspirations. Through qualitative interviews, the study reveals that strong familial ties, particularly with grandparents, foster positive attitudes and proficiency in local languages. In contrast, limited interactions and linguistic disconnects contribute to a preference for Indonesian over local dialects. The findings underscore the critical role of grandparents in maintaining linguistic diversity and highlight the need for supportive family environments to sustain bilingualism. This research provides a comprehensive understanding of the dynamics at play in family language policies. It emphasizes the importance of intergenerational relationships in preserving linguistic heritage. This study also discusses the implications of these findings for language policy and planning, suggesting that efforts to preserve local languages must consider the familial and emotional contexts in which these languages are used. Overall, this research underscores the vital role of family dynamics in shaping language use and attitudes, advocating for policies that support intergenerational communication and language transmission.

**Keywords:** family language policy; social capital; intergenerational relationships; linguistic diversity; bilingualism

### INTRODUCTION

Language policy studies focus on the interconnection between three key components: ideology, practice, and management, concerning language. Language ideology refers to individuals' beliefs about how language should be used. Language practices involve the language choices made by speakers within a community. Language management refers to the efforts made by individuals or institutions, both within and outside the community, to influence and change the beliefs and practices of community members (Spolsky, 2012). Family language policy is a subset of this academic field. The concept of Family Language Policy (FLP), similar to other policies, focuses

on a family's chosen values and represents society's perspectives and attitudes toward the appreciation and utilization of specific language(s) (Liddicoat & Baldauf, 2008).

Family language policy differs from broader language policy as it pertains to the unique and intimate realm of the family. It is intertwined with psycho-emotional aspects such as emotions, family ties, desires, aspirations for the future, and feelings of adoration, dislike, isolation, or closeness (Curdt-Christiansen & Iwaniec, 2023). Moreover, since "family tie" refers to the connections and relationships among family members, examining family relationships is a key aspect in conversations about family language policy.

The existing research on family language policy primarily concentrates on macro factors such as socio-economic and political influences (see Macalister & Miryahedi, 2017; Zheng & Mei, 2021), micro factors centered around parents such as expectations, attitudes, language experience, and knowledge of bilingualism, as well as parental roles in shaping language use within the household (see Curdt-Christiansen & Wang, 2018; Smith-Christmas, 2017). However, the unique dynamics within extended families, particularly the influence of grandparents and emotional bonds, remain underexplored. This research seeks to fill this gap by examining how intergenerational relationships – specifically the emotional attachment between grandparents and grandchildren – affect language choices and attitudes toward local languages. Through this focus, the study aims to uncover the non-linguistic factors which refer to emotional and relational dynamics within the family such as family ties, attachment bonds, and intergenerational support. Those may contribute to or hinder heritage language preservation in migrant families, providing new insights into the socio-emotional drivers of family language policy. Therefore, this study addresses the critical issue of heritage language maintenance among Indonesian migrant families. It examines the mutual connection between family ties and children's language proficiency by analyzing interviews conducted with children and adults from three local households residing in Samarinda, Indonesia.

## THE CONTEXT

Samarinda, the capital city of East Borneo province in Indonesia, has attracted considerable attention in the current academic landscape due to the recent establishment of the State Capital (IKN) as mandated by Law Number 3 of 2022 on February 15th, 2022. The municipal territory houses a diverse population of migrants from several Indonesian islands, resulting in a cosmopolitan and bilingual metropolis. Research has revealed that a significant proportion of the population is proficient in multiple languages while claiming to primarily speak Indonesian with a Banjarnese dialect (Rijal, 2023). The population comprises a substantial proportion of migrants from various regions, such as Javanese (36.7%), Banjarnese (24.14%), Bugis (14.43%), and Butonese (2.13%) (Rijal, 2023). Furthermore, there are additional migrant populations from various ethnic minorities, such as Torajanese, Minahasa, Batakese, Tionghoanese, Sundanese, Maduranese, Minangkabaunese, and others. The migrant families demonstrate proficiency in at least three languages, encompassing the local, national, and foreign languages, showcasing their multilingual abilities.

## SIGNIFICANCE OF FAMILIAL TIES IN HOME LANGUAGE PRESERVATION

Children regularly engage with their immediate family members and enhance their social and linguistic abilities (Paat, 2013), including developing their home language in the context of bilingual homes. An area of research focus in bilingual and/or multilingual households has been the examination of how family ties and the active involvement of family members contribute to the development of children's attachment to their native language.

Previous studies have examined how strong and supportive interactions between children and their parents affect the formation of positive attitudes about the language spoken at home. Chen's (2023) research on young adults who speak dialects and live in New Zealand demonstrated the significance of the family environment in preserving dialects. The study also emphasized how parents' beliefs and behaviors towards their native languages impact the language development of their children. The speaker highlighted the mutual influence of what they referred to as a "two-way relationship", in which strong family bonds can enhance children's language preservation. Simultaneously, a child's commitment to maintaining their mother tongue can contribute to family unity and positive relationships.

In their study, Humeau et al. (2023) examined 135 children from multilingual families in France. They found a correlation between the interactions between the children and their parents and the children's attitudes towards maintaining their home language. The study found that 10-year-old children who had close relationships with their parents were more likely to have a favorable attitude towards their native language. In Melo-Pfeifer's (2015) research on a Portuguese community in Germany, children's drawings were used as a primary means of gathering data. The study found that the minority language, Portuguese, was linked to the important role of family members, particularly grandparents, in promoting the preservation of the local language and fostering a positive emotional connection to it. According to Romanowski (2022), focusing on the involvement of Polish-Australian fathers in their children's home language development, including their commitment to providing resources, time, and motivation, leads to successful bilingual childrearing. Moreover, Wright (2020) demonstrated how the nonnormative family configurations (adoptive, single-parent, and LGBT+) in the global north construct their language ideology, practice, and planning through the kinship relationship to support the languages spoken at home. It is found that marginalized families, quite similar to those normative, also promote the home language by cherishing positive kinship among the family members.

Although the aforementioned research has emphasized the positive emotional aspects of the native tongue, it is crucial to recognize that there are also negative aspects. Studies have documented a correlation between weak family ties and the inability to maintain one's native language at home (Little, 2023; Tannenbaum, 2012). For instance, the study conducted by Little (2023) examined the emotional experiences and emotionally sensitive approach to family language policy in a mother and her 2-year-old son. Reacquainting oneself with the ancestral tongue can present emotional difficulties. The study records the emotional strain and dissatisfaction felt by both the parent and kid when they first start reconnecting with the local language. The study presents evidence indicating that impaired development of local language may result in the permanent transition away from the local language.

De Houwer (2020) also addresses the ongoing topic of the difficult and conflicting family ties between children and parents caused by linguistic barriers. The study investigates the correlation between the language input patterns of parents and the multilingual usage of children in families where at least one parent speaks a language different from the dominant language. De Houwer's study indicates that households in which both parents do not consistently or primarily

utilize the minority language have a less likelihood of successfully raising children who are fluent in the minority language. However, in families where both parents spoke the minority language or one of the parents spoke the minority language, the probability of offspring speaking the minority language was the highest.

Additional scholars have documented instances where adults assert their power by reprimanding and imposing discipline on their children using the language spoken at home (e.g. Luykx, 2003; Pavlenko, 2004; Smith-Christmas, 2014). These acts have sometimes prevented children from engaging in frequent conversations with their parents and from utilizing their native language (e.g. Luykx, 2003; Smith-Christmas, 2014). Luykx (2003) specifically highlighted how parents and older generations of Aymara's households embody cultural values of Aymara language through language socialization to their children. Smith-Christmas (2014) conducted a study on a bilingual Gaelic-English household in Scotland, focusing on the children's point of view. She discovered that the children's usage of their home language, Scottish Gaelic, decreased as a result of their father's disciplinary actions in that language.

In summary, the aforementioned research has examined various aspects of the relationship between family dynamics and the preservation of the home language, yielding both good and negative findings. These studies provide valuable insights into the correlation between parental bonds and home language maintenance, primarily by emphasizing parents' roles, beliefs, and practices. However, most findings have been derived from a parent-centric perspective, with limited direct exploration of children's perspectives or experiences. This study aims to address this gap by incorporating grandparents, parents, and children's viewpoints, offering a more holistic understanding of family language dynamics. It examines the continuous linguistic development and preservation of home languages in local families residing in Samarinda, a multicultural city in Indonesia. The study seeks to explore the intricate connection between family ties in family language policy and children's use and ambitions in their home language, using Bourdieu's (1986) concept of capital as the theoretical framework. Furthermore, it expands upon Bourdieu's concept of social capital, which is commonly examined with the broader society rather than the narrower sociolinguistic context of the family.

#### **BOURDIEU'S CAPITAL TO EXPLORE FAMILIAL TIES**

Bourdieu (1986) categorizes capital into three primary forms: economic, cultural, and social. Economic capital is the tangible assets and resources that individuals own. Cultural capital refers to the cultural knowledge, skills, and qualifications that an individual can acquire. Social capital is linked to the values that individuals acquire via their ties and affiliations with other groups. According to him, it is observed that capital can be exchanged or converted from one form to another. The study focuses on the significance of social capital in understanding the influence of family ties on family language policy. This notion allows for an examination of social capital about cultural capital, namely the linguistic competence of children seen as linguistic capital in this context. It is observed that links to a group are not inherently present and established permanently through an act of approval, such as the genealogical definition of familial relations within a family. Long-lasting and valuable connections are established and sustained via the tireless efforts and interactions of individuals. Consequently, this may result in individuals achieving additional economic, cultural, and social accomplishments.

This study utilizes Bourdieu's concept of social capital to examine the influence of family relationships on language policy with migrant families. While Bourdieu's theory originated in the 1980s, it remains relevant in contemporary family language policy research. Recent studies

continue to apply it to explore the socio-emotional and relational dynamics within multilingual families (e.g., Curdt-Christiansen & Huang, 2020; Smith-Christmas, 2017). Social capital, as defined by Bourdieu, provides a nuanced framework for analyzing how relationships, networks, and resources within families influence children’s language use and aspirations. In the context of this study, it helps capture the ways in which emotional and relational ties serve as resources – or social capital – that facilitate or hinder heritage language preservation. By examining language as a form of linguistic capital that can be transmitted through family bonds, Bourdieu’s theory aligns closely with the study’s objective. Recent applications of Bourdieu’s concept (e.g., Humeau et al., 2023; Wenhan et al., 2022), illustrate the continued relevance of social capital in examining how family relationships shape language practices in multicultural and multilingual settings.

## METHODS

This study employed a qualitative case study design to explore how intergenerational family relationships influence language policy within migrant families in Samarinda, Indonesia. This design was chosen as it facilitated an in-depth examination of the socio-emotional and relational dynamics of family language practices. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews with three families, targeting grandparents, parents, and children to capture diverse perspectives on language use and attitudes.

Participants were selected using purposive sampling to ensure that they met specific criteria relevant to the study’s objectives. The families included in the study had to meet the following criteria: 1) they were migrant families residing in Samarinda with a heritage language background, 2) each family represented at least two generations (grandparents and either parents or children) to examine intergenerational influences, and 3) they demonstrated regular interaction between grandparents and grandchildren, as this was critical for exploring the impact of emotional bonds on heritage language use. The inclusion of families with diverse ethnic backgrounds enriched the analysis of language maintenance across different cultural contexts.

Ethical considerations included consent forms that ensured adherence to standards regarding participant safety and confidentiality. Participants were informed about the study’s purpose, the voluntary nature of their involvement, and their right to withdraw at any time. Parental consent was obtained for child participants, and all identifying information was pseudonymized to protect privacy. Table 1 details the participating families’ demographic information.

TABLE 1. Participating families’ demographic information

Family	Adult’s details	Children’s details	Family member interviewed	Language use in the family
1	Mrs. Tobing, 72, teacher-retiree  Mr. Hasan, 36, businessman  Mrs. Duma, 36, lecturer	Kia, 10, girl, primary school  Fiqa, 4, girl, kindergarten	Mrs. Tobing, Mrs. Duma, Kia	Sibling talk: Indonesian language  Grandma-children talk: Indonesian and Bataknese language  Grandma-parents: Bataknese language  Parent-children talk: Indonesian language

2	Mr. Kai, 69, not working	Ahmad, 12, boy, 1 <sup>st</sup> grade senior school	Mr. Kai, Ahmad, Nur	Sibling-talk: Indonesian language
	Mr. Umar, 45, employee	Nur 8, girl, 4 <sup>th</sup> grade primary school		Grandpa-children talk: Banjarnese language
	Mrs. Norma 40, housewife			Grandpa-parents: Banjarnese language
3	Mr. Abram, 68, businessman	Azka 9, boy, 3 <sup>rd</sup> grade primary school	Mr. Abram, Azka, Azis	Parent-children talk: Indonesian language
	Mr. Utomo 33, lecturer			Sibling-talk: Indonesian language
	Mrs. Mia 32, lecturer	Azis, 7, boy, 1 <sup>st</sup> grade primary school		Grandpa-children talk: Indonesian language
				Grandpa-parents: Indonesian and Bugisnese language
				Parent-children talk: Indonesian language

\*Pseudonyms were used for all research participants.

### *Family 1*

The family is bilingual, with Mr. Hasan being Javanese and his wife, Mrs. Duma, being Bataknese. Mrs. Duma arrived in Samarinda in 2012 when she was 25 years old. At the age of 23 in 2010, Mr. Hasan went to Samarinda with his family. The couple has two children, Kia and Fiqa, both of whom were born in Samarinda. Mrs. Duma is employed as a lecturer at a private institution, while Mr. Hasan operates a farming enterprise. Mrs. Duma and Mr. Hasan depend on Mrs. Tobing to care for their children outside of school hours. Mrs. Tobing resided with the family during the infancy of the children, and they maintain regular interaction with her due to her near proximity. Ms. Riris, the sister of Ms. Duma, resided with the family for a duration of five years.

### *Family 2*

The second family exclusively speaks Banjarnese. Mrs. Norma and Mr. Umar arrived in Samarinda in 2001 and 2002, respectively. Their two children, Ahmad and Nur, were born in Samarinda. Mr. Kai is the father of Mrs. Norma. He resides with his daughter's family as a result of his wife's demise. His linguistic abilities are limited to the Banjarnese language. The family frequently engages in social activities with their numerous Banjarnese relatives and friends in Samarinda.

### *Family 3*

Both Mr. Utomo and Mrs. Mia hold positions as teachers at a public university. Mr. Abram operates his business from his residence; hence he remains at home throughout the entire day alongside his two grandchildren, Azka and Azis. Mr. Utomo arrived in Samarinda in 2015, and Mrs. Mia was born there. Mr. Abram accompanies his daughter's family to be with his grandsons. In addition, they are accompanied by Buginese relatives.

## THE INTERVIEWS

A semi-structured interview guide was developed to investigate participants' language choices, emotional bonds, and family interactions related to language transmission. The questions aimed to elicit rich, descriptive responses on themes such as perceptions of the heritage language, frequency of use, and family members' influence on language attitudes. Each interview was conducted in the participants' preferred language, then transcribed and translated for analysis. The interview protocol included two rounds: the first focused on language practices, while the second aimed to clarify and deepen initial responses, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of participants' experiences.

Not all members of the three families participated in the interviews. For Family 1, those who joined the interview were Mrs. Tobing (grandmother), Mrs. Duma (mother), and her child, Kia. For Family 2, the participants were two children, Ahmad and Nur, who provided information about their relationship with their grandfather, Mr. Kai. For Family 3, the interviewees were Mr. Abram (grandfather) and his grandsons, Azka and Azis.

Participants were encouraged to choose their preferred language for the interviews, all of which were audio-recorded. The study involved approximately six hours of interviews across the three families, with each family participating in two rounds. Adult interviews lasted between 30 minutes and one hour, while those with children ranged from 15 to 30 minutes. Data were transcribed in Indonesian and then translated into English, using verbatim transcription to preserve conversational flow. Participants were contacted for clarification during the transcription process and received the final transcripts for review.

## DATA ANALYSIS METHODS

The interview data was analyzed using the six-step theme analysis technique outlined by Braun and Clarke (2006). The author selected and analyzed excerpts of interview data from the three families to examine the role of family relationships in family language policy. These excerpts focused on the perspectives of both children and adults regarding language use, as well as their perceptions of the values associated with Indonesian and local languages in different settings. During the analysis, several themes related to family ties emerged. The concept of capital, as defined by Bourdieu (1986) in the theoretical framework, was subsequently utilized to examine the interdependent connection between family connections and the preservation of the local language.

To identify social capital, the interview transcripts were reviewed, focusing on family relationships—particularly the intensity, quality, and emotional nature of interactions between grandparents and grandchildren. These aspects were assessed to determine the supportive environment for heritage language use. Moreover, to assess linguistic capital, Bourdieu's concept guided the identification of language proficiency and attitudes as valuable resources within the family. Several expressions like pride, emotional connection, or perceives benefits from speaking heritage language were analyzed as indicators of linguistic capital. It allows for an understanding of how family members, particularly grandparents, value and transmit the heritage language to the children.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

In exploring the reciprocal association between the relationships within the family and home language maintenance, the interview excerpts were examined. The interviews were conducted with Kia, Mrs. Tobing, and Mrs. Duma in Family 1; Ahmad and Nur in Family 2 as well as Azka, Azis, and Mr. Abram in Family 3. The central theme that emerged from our analysis of the three families was the role of family connectedness in the children's attitudes towards speaking certain language(s) in this case local language and/or Indonesian language as well as their aspirations for future language use. As will be seen in the discussion of the samples, while the child in the first family (Kia) reported the importance of both Indonesian and local language in their present life, the children in the second family (Ahmad and Nur) reported the preference of Indonesian language due to their grandfather's limited-Indonesian language and third family (Azka and Azis) reported greater attachment to Indonesian due to future life. Analysis and discussion begin by examining the interviews of Family 1.

### FAMILY 1: A TIGHTLY-KNIT FAMILY

In the interview excerpts provided, Kia acknowledges the significance of being fluent in the majority language, Indonesian, for everyday communication. However, she also expresses her aspiration to maintain her ability to speak Bataknese in the future. This is important to her as it allows her to communicate with her extended family in her grandmother's hometown.

Excerpt 1 (Interview with Kia, aged 10, discussing aspirations for language learning)

- 1 Interviewer : *Apakah kamu bisa berbicara beberapa bahasa?*  
(Are you able to speak several languages?)
- 2 Kia : *Ya, tentu saja. Saya bisa berbicara tiga bahasa yakni bahasa*  
3 *Indonesia, bahasa Batak dan beberapa kosatakata bahasa inggris*  
(Yes of course. I am able to speak three languages, Indonesia,  
Bataknese, and some English words)
- 4 Interviewer : *Apakah kamu mau menunjukkan padaku cara berbicara*  
5 *dalam bahasa daerahmu?*  
(Would you like to show me how you speak your local language?)
- 6 Kia : *Mm... seperti ketabo mangan, ise na goar muyu, na loja tu au dah.*  
(Mm... it's like let's eat, what's your name, I'm so tired.)
- 7 Interviewer : *Saat kamu besar nanti, bagaimana kamu menggunakan ketiga*  
8 *bahasa tersebut?*  
(When you grow up, how do you think you will use those languages?)
- 9 Kia : *Ya, saya pakai bahasa Batak untuk berbicara dengan sodara-sodara di Medan.*  
10 *Kalau bahasa Indonesia saya lebih sering menggunakannya disini, karena di*  
11 *Samarinda kami perlu berbahasa Indonesia.*  
(Yes, I use Bataknese to speak with my relatives in Medan. For  
Indonesian, I have to use it often here, because this is Samarinda, we need  
to speak Indonesian.

In the excerpt above, the preservation of the connection among the family members was stated as a goal to interact with relatives using Bataknese by the girl (refer to Line 9: to speak to my relatives in Medan). For Kia, the Batak language is constructed as linguistic capital that carries important values for her future lives in preserving family social capital.



The role of Mrs. Tobing as an extended family living together with her granddaughters was construed as having a particularly significant influence on the children's home language use. It was found to contribute to the shaping of Kia's appreciation towards the home language, and by extension, ultimately to their competence in the home language. The interviews with Mrs. Duma and Mrs. Tobing highlight the extended family as an important social domain that Kia has engaged in since their early childhood.

Excerpt 2 (Interview with Mrs. Tobing, the grandmother, discussing reasons for Kia's Bataknesese competence)

- 1 Interviewer : *Nyonya Tobing, saya dengar anda memiliki tujuh orang cucu. Diantara mereka,*  
2 *siapa yang paling pandai berbahasa batak?*  
(Mrs. Tobing, I heard that you have seven grandchildren. Among them, who is able to speak Bataknesese the best?)
- 3 Mrs. Tobing : *Saya rasa Kia.*  
(I think Kia is the best.)
- 4 Interviewer : *Menurut anda, mengapa bahasa bataknya begitu bagus?*  
(Why do you think her Bataknesese is so good?)
- 5 Mrs. Tobing : *Ya, mungkin karena dia adalah cucu saya yang tertua dan saya pikir karena*  
6 *dia dikelilingi oleh kami yang banyak berbahasa Batak disini. Kami sering*  
7 *berbicara bahasa batak satu sama lain, saya dengan ibunya (Nona Duma), dan ketika*  
8 *tantenya (Nona Riris) tinggal disini bersama kami. Sekarang Riris pindah*  
9 *ke Jambi, jadi Kia punya sedikit kesempatan berbahasa Batak.*  
(Well, possibly, she is the eldest grandchild and I think it is because she is surrounded by us who speak Bataknesese here. We often speak Bataknesese each other. I am with her mom (Mrs. Duma), and when her aunt (Ms. Riris) lived here. Now, Riris lived in Jambi, so Kia has few opportunities to practice her Bataknesese.

Kia was raised in a linguistically diverse home milieu where all the elders spoke Bataknesese (Lines 6-8) except her father. The strong familial ties have bolstered their use of the Bataknesese language within the household, hence enhancing their linguistic proficiency. Additionally, it enhances their understanding and value of their native language. Specifically, Kia has had abundant chances to practice and enhance their Bataknesese language skills due to their close relationship with Mrs. Tobing, their grandmother, who has resided with them since birth and remains in close proximity. These possibilities were not available to their cousins. Here we observe the potential of family social capital to be passed on to children's language capital. To establish enduring and significant ties, it is crucial to consistently uphold the contacts among family members (Bourdieu, 1986). Mrs. Tobing's perspective interprets the function of the family as a supportive setting that encourages children to use and preserve their home language. Mrs. Duma's interview excerpt further confirms her involvement in helping the maintenance of local language.

Excerpt 3 (Interview with Mrs. Duma, discussing parental roles in home language maintenance)

- 1 Interviewer : *Apa pendapat anda tentang peran orangtua dalam mempertahankan*  
2 *bahasa lokal bagi anak-anak?*  
(What do you think the role of parents in maintaining home language for the children?)
- 3 Mrs. Duma : *Oh, orangtua memainkan peran yang sangat penting dalam memperta-*  
4 *hankan bahasa daerah anak-anak mereka karena orangtua adalah yang*  
5 *paling dekat dengan anak-anak mereka. Namun, disini kami masih mem-*  
6 *pertahankan tradisi Batak, yaitu nenek yang tinggal bersama cucunya*  
7 *terutama ketika pasangannya telah meninggal dunia. Pada keluarga yang*

8  
9

*tinggal bersama kakek-nenek seperti kami, anak-anak dapat berbicara lebih banyak bahasa Batak di rumah sejak usia dini.*  
(Oh, parents play a very important role in maintaining their children's local language because parents are the closest person to their children. But here, we still maintain the Batak tradition in which grandmothers living with their grandchildren particularly when spouses had passed away. For the families living with grandmothers like ours, children can speak more Bataknese at home from the early age.

Mrs. Duma recognizes her personal responsibility in preserving her children's native language, since parents hold a crucial position in retaining their children's linguistic local due to their close proximity to their offspring (Lines 3-4). Simultaneously, she underscores the crucial function of grandparents in facilitating the acquisition of Bataknese language skills among children within the family. Specifically, in households where grandparents are present, children are more likely to develop proficiency in Bataknese from a tender age. It is evident that the strong links and exchanges between the children and their grandmother from an early age have resulted in Kia having more opportunities to speak Bataknese, thereby ensuring the language's continued life. Significantly, although the interview question specifically addressed Mrs. Duma's role in preserving her children's native language, she expands on her answer to highlight her mother's relocation following her father's demise. Speaking the ancestral language helps to enhance communication between grandparents and grandchildren. This is consistent with Mrs. Tobing's description (see Excerpt 2) and emphasizes the importance of the women's argument regarding the increased chances for Kia to exercise and utilize their own language on a daily basis. These possibilities may not be as readily available in a traditional family structure.

In Kia's family, the close relationship between family members, especially with her grandmother (Mrs. Tobing), helped Kia to maintain and develop her Batak language skills. The presence of a grandmother who speaks Bataknese creates an environment that supports the use of the language. Bourdieu's social capital theory refers to the resources available to individuals through a network of family relationships. In this context, the close relationship between Kia and her grandmother provides social capital that supports the development of Kia's linguistic capital (Batak language skills). This process shows how social capital can be transformed into linguistic capital through intensive and sustained interactions within the family.

In summary, the selected excerpts regarding Kia's language experiences in the family have called attention to the participants' accounts of the critical role of positive family relationships in fostering the children's desire for and proficiency in the home language. The paper also emphasizes the manner in which the family, as a micro sociolinguistic domain, intersects with the broader sociolinguistic domain of society is also emphasized. Participants' perceptions of the past, present, and future are indicative of the intersection. The subsequent section illustrates an alternative scenario within Ahmad and Nur's household.

#### **FAMILY 2: GRANDFATHER'S DISTANCE FROM DESCENDANTS**

In Ahmad and Nur's family, the children reported spending less time than usual to interact with the grandfather. Consequently, there were fewer opportunities for the home language to be practiced and used. The following excerpts have been chosen to illustrate this point.

Excerpt 4 (Interview with Nur, aged 8, expressing language practices and communication preferences at home)

- 1 Interviewer : Nur, *bahasa apa yang kamu gunakan saat berbicara dengan orangtuamu?*  
(Nur, in what language do you speak to your parents?)
- 2 Nur : *Bahasa Indonesia*  
(Indonesian language)
- 3 Interviewer : *Bagaimana saat berbicara dengan kakek kamu?*  
(What about to your grandpa?)
- 4 Nur : (:) *Saya biasanya tidak banyak berbicara dengan kakek.*  
(smile) I don't usually speak to him a lot.
- 5 Interviewer : *Anda tidak banyak berbicara dengannya. Mengapa?*  
(You don't speak to him a lot. Why?)
- 6 Nur : *Saya tidak begitu yakin apa yang sebenarnya terjadi padanya, tetapi saat*  
7 *saya berbicara, dia hanya diam saja dan tampak bingung.*  
(I'm not really sure what happens to him but when I speak, he just keeps silent and seems to be confused.)
- 8 Interviewer : *Seberapa dekat kamu dengannya?*  
(How close are you to him?)
- 9 Nur : *Saya tidak dekat tapi bukan berarti saya tidak sayang padanya.*  
(I'm not close but it does not mean I don't love him.)

Excerpt 5 (Interview with Ahmad, aged 12, expressing language practices at home)

- 1 Interviewer : *Ketika kamu bermain dengan saudara lelakimu, bahasa apa yang kamu gunakan?*  
(When you play with your brother, what language do you use?)
- 2 Ahmad : *Bahasa Indonesia sepanjang waktu.*  
(Indonesian all the time.)
- 3 Interviewer : *Bagaimana saat kamu berbicara dengan orangtuamu, bahasa Indonesia atau ?*  
4 *gabungan ...?*  
(So when you speak to your parents, Indonesian only or mixing...?)
- 5 Ahmad : *Indonesia juga.*  
(Indonesian too.)
- 6 Interviewer : *Apakah ibumu memintamu untuk berbicara dalam dua bahasa, yaotu bahasa*  
7 *Banjar dan bahasa Indonesia kepada kakek kamu?*  
(Does your mum ask you to speak mixed-languages Bajarnese and Indonesian to your grandfather?)
- 8 Ahmad : *Ya, dia sering memintanya.*  
(Yeah, she often asks me so.)
- 9 Interviewer : *Lalu kamu bilang apa?*  
(What did you say after that?)
- 10 Ahmad : *Sulit sekali karena saya tidak mengerti apa yang harus saya katakan padanya*  
11 *(kakek)*  
(It is so hard because I don't understand what to say to him.)
- 12 Interviewer : *Bagaimana dengan kakek kamu? Apakah dia berbicara bahasa Indonesia atau*  
13 *bahasa Banjar kepadamu?*  
(What about your grandfather? Does he speak Indonesian or Banjarnese to you?)
- 14 Ahmad : *Emm...tetapi saya tidak banyak berbicara dengannya*  
(Emm... but I don't speak to my grandfather much)
- 15 Interviewer : *Bolehkah saya tau mengapa?*  
(May I ask why?)
- 16 Ahmad : *Saya pikir dia hanya berbicara menggunakan bahasanya dan saya tidak bisa*  
17 *menjawab apa yang dia (kakek) tanyakan.*  
(I think he only speaks his language, and I can't answer what he asks.)
- 18 Interviewer : *Apakah kamu peduli dengannya (kakek)?*  
(Do you care about him?)
- 19 Ahmad : *Ya, aku peduli tapi tak bisa berbicara dengannya. Itu saja!*  
(Yes, I do but can't speak to him. That's all!)

As observed in excerpts 4 and 5, Nur reported that he did not speak very much to his grandfather, illustrated in the statement: ... *when I speak, he just keeps silent and seems to be confused* (Lines 6 and 7) (Nur, excerpt 4). Ahmad also confirmed the infrequent grandfather-grandson exchanges in another interview excerpt and offered an explanation: *I think he only speaks his language, and I can't answer what he asks* (Lines 16-17) (Ahmad, excerpt 5).

The grandfather is the primary or dominant speaker of the Banjar language within the family. Ahmad and Nur faced communication difficulties with him due to his incapacity to speak languages other than his local tongue (Banjar), which caused negative circumstances in the family. The Banjar language may not hold significant symbolic value for the two grandchildren, Nur and Ahmad, due to its association with a family member's language limitation. This creates a gap between family members, leading to disharmony in their relationships. As a consequence, Ahmad and Nur have become uninterested in engaging in communication with their grandfather.

In Ahmad and Nur's family, a less close relationship with the grandfather means that there are fewer opportunities to use the Banjar language. The grandfather who only speaks Banjarnese and rarely interacts with his grandchildren causes the children to prefer Indonesian. Bourdieu's concept of social capital can explain this finding. Ahmad and Nur's families lack strong social capital with their grandfather, which limits the opportunities to utilize linguistic capital (Banjar language). This suggests that without close and supportive family relationships, it is difficult for children to develop and maintain their local language. Contrary with Family 2, the third family had a strong bond between grandparents and grandchildren and shared a mutual interest.

### FAMILY 3: SOMETHING IN COMMON

Contrary with Family 2, the third family had a strong bond between grandparents and grandchildren and shared a mutual interest. In the third family, all participants claim that they speak Indonesian. Mr. Abram reported spending much time in playing and interacting with his grandchildren. As a result, there were more opportunities for Indonesian language to be practiced and used. The following excerpts have been chosen to illustrate this point.

Excerpt 6 (Interview with Mr. Abram, expressing language practices and language learning aspiration)

- 1 Interviewer : *Apakah anda dekat dengan cucu-cucu anda?*  
(Are you close with your grandsons?)
- 2 Mr. Abram : *Tentu saja.*  
(Certainly, yes.)
- 3 Interviewer : *Bagaimana anda menghabiskan waktu dengan mereka?*  
(How do you spend your time with them?)
- 4 Mr. Abram : *Saya selalu menghabiskan waktu sore hari dengan bermain dan mengobrol dengan mereka. Saya bertanya kepada mereka tentang kegiatan mereka di sekolah*  
(I always spend my afternoon by playing and talking to them. I ask them about their school-hours activity.)
- 5
- 6 Interviewer : *Bagaimana anda berbicara dengan mereka? Apakah anda menggunakan bahasa*  
  
7 *Indonesia atau bahasa Bugis?*  
(How do you speak to them? Do you use Indonesian or Bugis?)
- 8 Mr. Abram : *Tentu saja kami menggunakan bahasa Indonesia, bahasa kami.*  
(Of course we use Indonesian, our language.)
- 9 Interviewer : *Tolong beritahu saya mengapa demikian, Pak Abram?*  
(Please tell me why it is so, Mr. Abram?)

- 10 Mr. Abram : *Saya rasa berbicara dengan siapapun saat ini harus menggunakan bahasa Indonesia*  
11 *karena perannya sebagai lingua franca. Bahkan, anak-anak juga diajarkan bahasa*  
12 *Indonesia di sekolah. Selain itu, di Samarinda jarang sekali kita mendengar orang*  
13 *berbicara bahasa daerah mereka. Hampir semua orang berbahasa Indonesia.*  
(I think speaking to anyone today must be in Indonesian due to its role as lingua franca. Indeed, the children are also taught Indonesian at school. Moreover, in Samarinda it is rare to hear people speaking their local language. Most people speak Indonesian.)
- 14 Interviewer : *O, begitu. Apa yang anda harapkan dari hal tersebut? Maksud saya harapan anda*  
15 *menggunakan bahasa Indonesia kepada cucu-cucu anda?*  
(O, I see. What do you expect from it? I mean your expectation speaking Indonesian to your grandsons?)
- 16 Mr. Abram : *Saya berharap keturunan saya atau setidaknya cucu-cucu saya mengikuti*  
17 *perkembangan zaman dan informasi terbaru.*  
(I hope my descendants or at least my grandchildren keep up with the latest times and information.)

There are two main points discussed in Mr. Abram's responses. First, it is clear that he orients to the educational and societal demand. By getting the kids used to speaking Indonesian, Mr. Abram improves his grandsons' language acquisition. Moreover, he reacts to the situation occurred in Samarinda in which less people use their local language for communication. Most people prefer to speak Indonesian due to the diversity of cultural background. Second, Mr. Abram insists on the future use of the Indonesian language. He dreams of his offspring being up to date. He believes that the Indonesian language is a means to stay informed about the latest developments and information. Therefore, Mr. Abram has a positive attitude toward the Indonesian language. To confirm what has been said by Mr. Abram, the following excerpt illustrates Azka and Azis' views on Indonesian language.

#### Excerpt 7 (Interview with Azka and Azis, expressing reasons for speaking Indonesian)

- 1 Interviewer : *Bagaimana kamu menghabiskan waktu di rumah?*  
(How do you spend your time at home?)
- 2 Azka : *Kami selalu bermain Maggasing dan ngobrol tentang aktifitas sekolah kami kepada*  
3 *kakek*  
(We always play Maggasing and talking about our school activity to our grandfather)
- 4 Interviewer : *Siapa kami? Hanya kamu dan kakekmu saja?*  
(Who are 'we'? Only you and your grandfather?)
- 5 Azka : *Tidak. Maksudnya Azis dan saya. Kita bermain bersama kakek.*  
(No. I mean Azis, grandfather, and I. We play it altogether.)
- 6 Interviewer : *Ya... Bahasa apa yang kalian gunakan saat berbicara dan bermain bersama kakek?*  
(Yeah. What language do you use when speaking and playing with your grandfather?)
- 7 Azka : *Kami gunakan bahasa Indonesia. Kami tidak pernah menggunakan bahasa lain*  
8 *selain bahasa Indonesia di rumah. Kakek kami pernah berkata kalau bahasa*  
9 *Indonesia lebih penting daripada bahasa daerah.*  
(We use Indonesian language. We never use other languages other than Indonesian at home. He has said that Indonesian is more important than local language.)
- 10 Interviewer : *Apa kamu sependapat dengannya?*  
(Do you agree with his opinion?)
- 11 Azka : *Tentu saja. Kami tidak pernah belajar bahasa Bugis atau bahasa daerah lain di sini.*  
12 *Bahasa Indonesia adalah bahasa pengantar dan alat komunikasi di sekolah. Saya*  
13 *tidak pernah mendengar teman-teman saya disekolah menggunakan bahasa daerah*  
14 *mereka.*  
(Absolutely yes. We never learn Bugisnese or other local language subjects here.)

- Indonesian is the medium of instruction and communication at school. I have never heard my friends at school use their local languages.)
- 15 Interviewer : *Bagaimana denganmu Azis?*  
(What about you Azis?)
- 16 Azis : *Ya, kakek juga pernah bilang begitu. Ayah dan ibu juga meminta saya untuk*  
17 *menggunakan bahasa Indonesia. Mereka bilang akan berguna untuk belajar bahasa*  
18 *Inggris saat masuk SMA.*  
(Yes, grandfather ever says so. Mum and dad also ask me to use Indonesian language. They said it will be useful to learn English later we enter the high school.)
- 19 Interviewer : *O, begitu. Jadi semua anggota keluarga kamu menggunakan bahasa Indonesia.*  
(O, I see, so all members of your family just speak Indonesian.)
- 20 Azis : *Begitulah.*  
(Yes, indeed.)

From the excerpt above, all family members agree that Indonesian language is more significant than local language. Therefore, they have something in common in which “standing on using Indonesian at home”. The family’s decision to focus more on Indonesian is based on future aspirations and the importance of Indonesian as a lingua franca in Samarinda. Bourdieu states that cultural capital includes knowledge, skills and education acquired by individuals. In this context, the use of Indonesian is considered an important cultural capital for future educational and social success. Azka and Azis’ family views Indonesian as an important capital to achieve their goals in the future, so they choose to focus more on this language rather than the local language.

Our study has shown a significant conclusion about the significance of family connectedness in the successful preservation of the native language. Our study has highlighted the pro-monolingual practices in Ahmad and Nur’s family and the pro-bilingual practices in Kia’s family. We have emphasized the significance of family social capital in developing successful family language policy, emphasizing the role of family ties in this process.

The strong familial social capital within Kia’s family, represented by the relationships between the children and their grandparents, significantly influenced and fostered the children’s understanding of the importance of communicating in their native language. In contrast, Ahmad and Nur’s family has limited social connections and a lack of linguistic knowledge about their local language, Banjarnese. This is evident in their distant relationship with their grandfather, who only speaks Banjarnese. Both grandchildren admitted that they had rare opportunities for interaction with him. As a result, there are fewer interactions among them. This may have further influenced their preference for using Indonesian and undervaluing the significance of the local language, specifically Banjarnese.

In contrast to both households, Azka and Azis’ family adopts a monolingual approach to raising their children. Every family member has unanimously agreed to use Indonesian exclusively as their primary language at home. This decision has proven to be beneficial for parents who have high hopes for their children’s future (Curdt-Christiansen, 2009; Schwartz & Verschik, 2013).

The results draw attention to the role of older family members (grandmothers and grandfathers) as important agents in shaping the family language policy. Strong relationships between older and younger generations contribute to the transfer of social and linguistic capital. Bourdieu points out that capital can be transferred between generations through ongoing interactions and relationships. In this study, grandmothers and grandfathers act as custodians of the local language and provide a supportive environment for the development of the language in the younger generation. This transfer of capital demonstrates the importance of intergenerational relationships in maintaining local languages and family language policies.

These findings corroborate prior research on the importance of family bonds in family language policy, and the relationship between a supportive atmosphere and favorable language usage at home (e.g. Said & Zhu, 2019; Tannenbaum & Howie, 2002; Wright, 2020). Tannenbaum and Howie (2002) observed a reciprocal connection between close family relationships and the preservation of the home tongue. According to their assertion, a robust familial bond can contribute to the preservation of language skills in children. Conversely, the advanced linguistic proficiency of children in their native language can foster harmonious family ties. These results regarding the family dynamics and language usage of family members in this current study are consistent with and address the requirement for empirical research on the balanced development of children's languages in bilingual families (De Houwer, 2020). The study has found evidence supporting the idea that a language gap between parents and children can lead to emotional distance. This finding aligns with previous research by Bui et al. (2024) and Fillmore (2000) that the perspectives of both grandparents and grandchildren are reported as conflictive bilingualism and the negative experiences associated with it in the family.

In addition, by examining the language beliefs held by the children and adults in an extended family, this study also concurs with prior research that has highlighted the significant role of grandparents in helping to maintain the children's home language (e.g. Clyne, 1982; Smith-Christmas, 2014; Wenhan et al., 2022). Wenhan et al. (2022) has drawn attention to the extended family as a particularly important context for home language development and maintenance. As Clyne (1982) contends that the extended family structure may be more conducive to language ecology than the nuclear family. Kia's continuing strong relationships with the grandmother beyond early childhood provided the motivation to speak Batakese, pointing to the central role that rich, regular communication over time plays. The regularity of communication, according to Lightbown and Spada (2013), is one of the most influential incentives for home language learning. In extending prior research, this study has added the importance of the long-lasting experiences in the development of such motivations by enabling participant accounts of how past early childhood experiences are connected to continuing present language use and to aspirational use in the future.

## CONCLUSION

Drawing on both adults' and children's voices, the analysis has highlighted the reciprocal nature of relationships and language use found in the family. The study has illustrated how children's exposure to a linguistically rich and closely connected environment at home in a supportive family environment, contributed significantly to shaping their appreciation of the importance of communicating in the home language. Relatedly, it has shown how a family environment, in which the reported bonds between family members are not strong, can have a negative impact on children's uptake of the home language and their desire to speak it. We have also provided further evidence to support Bourdieu's (1986) claims on the nature of capital by attending to the family as a context. We have uncovered how children's sound linguistic capital turns into rich family social capital, and on the reverse side, how limited family social capital turns into limited linguistic capital.

In sum, it is hoped to have contributed to the existing research on family language policy in the following ways. First, the exploration of the children's perspectives on their languages and the affective dimension of language use alongside those of the parents, has permitted moving away from a reliance on the adults' voice in family language policy and added to the small body of work

on children's voice. Second, it is shown Bourdieu's (1986) concept of capital can add a nuanced lens to the interpretation of family language policy in exploring the subtle transferability between family relationships and children's home language use and aspirations. In taking such an approach, the study has shown the importance of the relationships developed in strengthening children's positive affect in the home language. As exemplified in Family 1, the nurturing of family relationships from a young age was shown to have a long-lasting impact on the children's present and future language use and investment in their bilingualism. In turn, it extends the evidence on the importance of social capital – formed within the sociolinguistic domain of the family – on children's harmonious bilingual development.

This study sheds light on how attachment relationships and family cohesion affect family language policy. It illuminates intergenerational influence, which family language policy research generally overlooks. This research also applies Bourdieu's social capital theory to language maintenance by providing a conceptual framework for how family interactions help preserve heritage languages. First, the study emphasizes the importance of grandparents and intergenerational relationships in migrant families' heritage language preservation. These insights can help educators and language preservationists create family-centered language programs that encourage older family members to actively participate in children's bilingualism and support multilingual development. Second, in multilingual situations like Samarinda, culturally sensitive language policies that recognize and support the family as an important area for language maintenance are crucial for policymakers. Third, the study fills a vacuum in family language policy literature by examining how emotional and intergenerational relationships affect heritage language behaviors.

The limited sample size and geographic focus of this study present notable limitations. With only three families interviewed, the findings may not represent the broader population, thus limiting generalizability. Future research should explore similar dynamics in other multicultural and multilingual contexts, examining specific strategies that families employ to balance heritage and dominant language use. This approach will enhance our understanding of family language policies.

#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Special thanks go to Bapak Irwan Sumarsono for reading an earlier version and the three families as her research participants. This research is funded by Balai Penerimaan Pendidikan Tinggi (BPPT) and Lembaga Pengelolaan Dana Pendidikan (LPDP) – Indonesia.

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