

NEGOTIATION BY THE FEMALE LANGUAGE USER OF FRENCH IN INDONESIA: A SOCIOLINGUISTIC CRITICAL PERSPECTIVE

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ABSTRACT

The diffusion of French as foreign language is the most institutionalized and systemic in the world. Nowadays the European framework for languages is also supporting this fact as one of the linguistic instrument. This article aims to describe and analyse how the female language user in Indonesia negotiate and adapt to the French language demands that completely far beyond their socio-cultural realities in daily life. How the female language user is struggling and finding strategies in French? What kind of discourse practice are they attracting to and using the most? Why are some of their choices and strategies different from the male language user? In order to analyse this aspect, the classic linguistic description or the sociolinguistic in the structural perspective wouldn't be satisfying. We could never separate their linguistic production from their social practice. Based on this assumption we choose to use the critical perspective and methodology for the sociolinguistic domain. This research finds that female language user is more captive to linguistic practice in French at two different states: phonetic and lexical. They are also more attracted to various kind of discourse practice especially those related to the consumption pattern.

Keywords: French, language user, politic linguistic, sociolinguistic critic, CECR

INTRODUCTION

French language is one of the foreign languages taught in Indonesia since the late of 1970 in the universities and several high schools. As a foreign language, French has two status in those educational institutions; whether as an optional subject or as a major subject in the French department. Both status will have the different impact obviously on the actors involve as language instructor or learners. In this research we will consider the people involved in the French language studies as the French language user. Using the sociolinguistic critic perspective we will see the French language user in this context as a subject and an active agent who perform linguistically en French with all their sociological background. As Claire Kramsch has said before (Kramsch 2002: 5):

“... learning is a nonlinear, relational human activity, co-constructed between humans and their environment, contingent upon their position in space and history, and a site of struggle for the control of social power and cultural memory.”

Therefore, the language user in a learning process should not be treated as only an object for the practices and activities of the pedagogical contexts. They should not simply be measured by a chain of tests to see whether the output performance is corresponding to the input materials. By putting the language user as the subject in their French studies, they will have the choices and will negotiate to fulfil their interests in language according to their needs, motivations and social position related to French.

This research will bring into focus the French language user in Indonesia that is frequently put in the educational context as the object of the pedagogical discourse. Through this analyse we will particularly expose how female French user in Indonesia develops their strategies and negotiate to perform the linguistic and socio-cultural task in French as to CEFR¹ demand. As we understand that they have to confront the sociocultural and linguistic distance from French to their mother tongue. Within Indonesian context, mother tongue could vary between the regional language and the Indonesian as Lingua Franca that begins to be also the mother tongue, mostly for the citizen of the metro-pole and the capital of provinces. This aspect will definitely play an important role in the linguistic performance of the French language user.

Female French language user in Indonesia

This research is conducted in three different educational institutions on higher education having the French department. We have found several similarities between this three institutions, despite their different profile as a higher educational institution. All this three institutions are dominated by female French language user in term of population, with the major ratio 1 : 9 for female learners. The best achievement in this three departments is also dominated by female member. Even up to the national level, on this year 2016, the best result for the international language certificate DELF-DALF at all level goes to the female language user². At this point we may say that the domain of French studies in Indonesia is the domination feminine, to use the opposite term of the “*domination masculine*” concept by Pierre Bourdieu (1998). According to Bourdieu, the tradition and social habitus have shaped the society to the masculine domination, given the role predetermine for male and female in many aspect. The study of literature and linguistic are the only domain that being feminize in term of population. In fact, this research has shown that the domination feminine in this domain is not only for the population but also in term of the achievement and performance.

The motivations and reasons for choosing French among the female language user is mostly related to their representation about language study, the professionals possibility afterward and the willing to pursuit their higher education in France. The representations of France as a beautiful, modern and romantic country are also the attraction mentioned by the informants in this research. This images and dreams play an essential role in the construction of their linguistic and socio-cultural performances in French language. The majority of the female French language user who believe and interpreting totally their representations of French tend to succeed more than those who are

¹CEFR is the Common European Framework of References for Language that been used since 2002 as the main reference for language in 47 countries in Europe, Japan, Canada and other non european countries.

²Ambassade de France in Jakarta through their website : <http://www.ifi-id.com/sertifikasi>

not having this conscious. Having this representation and interpretation in mind is also encouraging them to do more in language practice. As in another occasion Bourdieu (1982: 35) said that the female language user is more prompt to adopt the legitimate language as they are more dedicated and obedient to the dominant as the consumption pattern.

Based on this perspective of Bourdieu we could consider that the French language and cultural attract to woman as the material goods that being consumed by female population. In the same way perhaps that women tend to be more attracted to the branded materials. As one of informants in this research said in an interview:

“Saya pilih Prancis soalnya bahasanya keren mba, romantis. Dan nanti kepengen nerusin kuliah ke Prancis, lihat menara Eiffel tiap hari, kan keren banget mba.”

Translation:

“I’m choosing French because it’s cool, it’s romantic. And one day I will continue my study to France, I will see the Eiffel tower everyday, isn’t that very cool.”

It is largely known that France has its reputation on luxury image and lifestyle. This representation is also being diffused by the media, movies and visual art in Indonesia. Everything related to France is labelled to be romantic, luxury, beautiful, modern and chic. We can see these representations through the films, novels, advertising materials, media etc shown in daily life. As in the consumption pattern, the same representations are also being consumed in French language.

A successful female French language user in Indonesia tends to interpret totally this representation of luxury France along with the way of act and the way of thinking in French. We could consider this fact as their strategy of struggling in order of mastering French language. While for the male language user, this aspect does not impact them in the same way. Since they tend to be more realistic and having less knowledge in terms of luxury goods and romantic movies. This lack of knowledge is affecting their motivation in certain ways. Nevertheless, we could also find the motivated male French language user, with the same representation only in a very small percentage. Using the socio-cultural perspective we could identify the socio-economy background of the subject to this luxury good, which is the majority of middle to upper class of the society. Their choice of French partly shows the knowledge for this aspect of consumption pattern and indicates at the same time the will to elevate in the social class level.

Linguistic performance of the female French language user

As the primary motivation for the part of female French language user is to be able to perform linguistically within the luxury community, their first contact with the French language is at the lexical level. The lexical elements involve is mostly the brands of luxury goods³: Chanel, Louis Vuitton, Hermes, haute-couture, Dior, L’Oréal, etc. The majority of the female informants in this research already know these lexical elements but ignored their pronunciation at the first stage of the French learning. Some say that they put a great interest in the capacity to the pronunciation in French, considering

³ The brands mentioned are not intended to be for marketing purposes.

their first impression that marked a performance in mastering a foreign language.

These anecdotes showed that for the female French language user, the lexical and the phonology aspect are the two domain of linguistic they are using frequently to develop their progression in French. Accordingly, we have the confirmation for this hypothesis from the informant:

“Supaya bisa itu saya nyatet semua kosakata baru mba. Pokoknya setiap hari ada kosakata baru, saya catat semua, saya punya buku khusus untuk nyatet kata-kata baru, trus diusahain supaya hapal.”

Translation:

“In order to be able, I take note of every new vocabulary. No matter what, everyday I have new vocabulary, I note them all, I have a special book to note the new vocabulary, and then I try to memorise them.”

This strategy requires the diligent and consistent work and very time consuming. Obviously, it also demands a persistent effort to listen, to observe in detail, to take note and to memorise those lexical element. Regarding this fact, it is hard to not be falling into the stereotype of division of male and female task that has been constructed by the social habitus according to Bourdieu (1998). The action mentioned by the informant risk to be categorise as the female task. Since its very detail and it needs a certain obedient to be able to complete the whole task.

The measurement used for the French language performance since 2002 in all over the world is the CEFR. This European framework for languages has recommended an approach which require the language user to be able to incorporate the knowledge (*savoir*), the way of act (*savoir-faire*), the way of being (*savoir-être*) in the language learned, so in our case is French language. The requirement of the CEFR meets perfectly the tendency of the motivated female French user mentioned above. Eventually, most of them have ignored the requirement from the CEFR in language progression. In the contrary to those who are tending to be more reflective and comparative to their proper language and culture. The contrast will proceed slower in their progression to French language in term of capacity to act with the language, but it doesn't mean that they are not capable.

CONCLUSION

Through the analyses of this research we have the conclusion that for the French language studies in Indonesia, not only the population is being dominated by female, but also the best achievement is dominated by them. The domination of female French language user mostly due to the representation of French and France country which is diffused in a long term by different canal such as media, films, advertising, etc. By incorporating the image and the representation totally in the processes of language acquisition, unconsciously most of the female language user in Indonesia has also applying the requirement from the CEFR as the language framework used to evaluate their performance.

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