

Bernadette Kushartanti

## The Acquisition of Stylistic Variation by Jakarta Indonesian Children

To become competent speakers in their community, children have to learn the grammatical rules and lexicon of one or more language varieties. In addition, they need to learn when to use these varieties and to adapt their speech to both topic and setting. In the case of Indonesian, children in the capital, Jakarta, must cope with the use of different varieties of the language. The two varieties of Indonesian which these children need to acquire are Bahasa Indonesia (the standard language) and Colloquial Jakarta Indonesian.

This study focuses on three to five year old, middle class children in Jakarta. Over a period of six months, the factors influencing the use of both varieties, the children's ability to style shift in a formal and informal situation, and the acquisition of a number of morphological variables were examined. The research shows that children use more Bahasa Indonesia in formal than in informal situations, and more Colloquial Jakarta Indonesian in informal than formal situations. This indicates that they are linguistically sensitive to different situations at this early age. However, large individual differences were also observed. Further, the children acquire grammatical and social competence simultaneously, with the informal variety going ahead of the formal.

This study will be of interest to researchers working on language acquisition, educational language policy, bilingualism, and language variation. It provides a better understanding of the language learning process by Indonesian preschoolers, which is an important aspect of language education, language planning and policy in Indonesia.

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Netherlands  
Graduate  
School of  
Linguistics

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Landelijke Onderzoeksschool Taalwetenschap

