

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### **Background of the study**

Many poststructuralist theories today focus on the relation between language and learner identity. Language has served its role not only as the medium of communication; it also influences the speaker's identity. Identity in this context is described as something fluid and it changes over time and space (Norton, 2011). The person speaking L1 may carry different identities when speaking another language because the speakers do come up with an idea of imagined identity, that is an expectation or dream they want to achieve when using certain languages. There is even a case when someone is willing to refrain from using their L1 because they think L2 gives more benefit.

English in Indonesia has long been regarded as an elite language, rooting back from the time after the end of World War II and the Independence Day. It was announced, after the Independence Day, that English officially became the primary foreign language studied nationally due to its value in international communication. Before 1994, English was introduced to secondary level students for three to five hours a week focusing on reading skill. Then after that, it was decided that English was introduced earlier to grade 4 primary level students, shifting its focus to speaking skill (Ho & Wong, 1997). The main reason for the change of study focus was because of the country's demand for human capital proficient in English and partially parents' will for providing children with early English education for future prospects of employment.

As a matter of fact, the particular trend has shaped the interest of many Indonesian middle to upper class households, raising a concern over the young generation of Indonesians. Parents are now trying to raise their children to speak more English, while neglecting their Indonesian. Finding more and more Indonesian children who speak more English than Indonesian has become ubiquitous. Lie (2017) points out that children speaking fluently in English to their parents can be heard in big cities in Indonesia; children may also be seen to communicate in English even outside the classroom in a non-formal context. This phenomenon is seen to be a jeopardy for maintaining

Indonesian language in the future. With the goal in mind trying to preserve the Indonesian culture, based on *Kurikulum 2013* (Indonesia's national school curriculum), the government has decided to shorten lesson hours for English and increase Indonesian lesson hour between four and six hours a week (Lie, 2017). Though the act done by the government concerning this matter seems feasible, it is premature to pinpoint the exact cause to this trend as research on finding reasons why these children choose English over Indonesian has not been well established yet.

One of the probable factors that influence children's choice over language for communication is from what they encounter at home and community. Home and community give not only some influences to a child's language development to some extent, but also influence children's belief towards the language they use. Children over the years try to make sense of the world around them. What they know as the rightful thing to do is from what they experience on a day-to-day basis in their lives. As years go by, their imagined identity is shaped based on the nurture and exposure they have got from the surroundings.

### **Statement of the problem**

This research tries to unearth the identity of two Indonesian-English bilingual adolescents upon the following question: How do home and community factors affect imagined identity?

### **Theoretical framework**

As many SLA experts believe, language learners are living in homogenous society which may offer them a choice to practice their target language learned in the community. Good language learners have been predicted to have high motivation to use the target language to certain group of people. Nevertheless, motivation may not be the only sole factor. Norton (2012) argues that it could be language learners' identity that contributes to the learning process. Identity in second language learning refers to personal perspective from individuals when they try to make sense of the world around them and how they see the future possibilities when using the language.

The idea of bilingualism is not something new. In Indonesian, bilingualism is common as the citizens of the country comprises of multiple ethnicities. There have continuous debates regarding the implementation of bilingual education not only at school level but also home level. Beardsmore (2001) and Cummins (2003) support the idea of bilingualism by emphasising that learning L1 does not impede the L2 language learning process and instead the proficiency of L1 may accelerate the process of learning L2 for children as they have grasped the language concept from L1. Nonetheless, Beardsmore (2001) notes that there are four types of fears against bilingualism which will be explained further in the following chapter.

Two major factors that contribute to a person's bilingualism are home and community factors as summarised by Dixon et al, (2008). One may become an additive bilingual -- L2 is seen as the addition to L1 proficiency-- or a subtractive bilingual-- L2 replaces the role of L1 (May et al., 2004). The choice that a person makes, whether to be an additive or a subtractive bilingual is not solely by that one individual decision alone. It is worth noting that their decision is somewhat influenced by their upbringing and the society context they have been involved.

The phenomenon of bilingualism creates the idea of translanguaging. Canagarajah (2015) defines translanguaging as a language principle which allow speakers outside the so-called 'native speakers' group to influence the grammar and vocabulary the language embodies. It raises the concern that a language is no longer owned by the native speakers who live in the originated land of the language but possibly to other groups of people who are using the language actively, living in other places outside the native land of the language.

### **Significance of the study**

The impact of globalization and westernization to the young generations of Indonesia has raised some concerns in Indonesia. Yet, there has not been much research conducted regarding imagine identity in Indonesian bilingual context as there is a growing number of Indonesian-English bilinguals in Indonesia nowadays. Therefore, to say that Indonesians who are more comfortable in using other foreign languages, in this case English, are losing their Indonesian identity should be

considered as a premature deduction. This study intended to observe and analyze the identity of two young Indonesian adults who were fluent in Indonesian and English, whether they maintained or lost their Indonesian identities while being able to use English comfortably. It was hoped that this research would give an insight to the future researcher observing the identity of Indonesian adolescents. In addition, it might be used as one of the supporting result for decision makers in English language teaching either for school policy or national curriculum regulation.

### **Scope and limitation**

The participants of this study were two students from SMAK. St. Louis 1 Surabaya taking science program as their major. The decision in choosing the participants was solely based on researcher's personal observation in Grade X as their English teacher. This study was limited to children raised in middle-upper class families studying in a private school using the Indonesian national curriculum.

### **Definition of key terms**

**Imagined identity** is the mental image created by language speakers when they use certain languages. This type of identity may not carry what the general norm referred as 'identity', e.g., gender; it carries the expectations or dreams of what the language the speakers use may give to them.

**Bilingualism** is the term for people who have managed to master two languages with equal proficiency.