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It's adu penalti man!: Understanding the translingual practices of an Indonesian family living in the US

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the kinds of translingual negotiation strategies practiced by an Indonesian family living in the US. This study involved a father and son, natives of Indonesia, who had been in the US for many years. The father and son usually mix and mesh English, Indonesian, and Javanese when communicating. Two kinds of data were collected; the daily talks between the father and son were audiotaped, and follow-up interviews with the father and member checking were used to triangulate the data. The data reveals that the father and son indeed practiced Canagajarah's (2013b) four translingual negotiation strategies: invoicing, recontextualization, interactional, and entextualization. Additionally, the interview reveals some of the father's goals with his son's language learning and literacy in their mother tongue.

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1. Introduction

The notion of translingualism has been widely addressed in the literature nowadays, considering that diverse student populations continuously attend classrooms in traditionally-monolingual countries such as the US. This condition has seemingly made it challenging to implement a monolingual language policy or perhaps a “standard” English-only perspective. The notion of translingualism is then upheld to address such difficulty and provide an alternative approach that will enable teachers to address the linguistic complexities in their classrooms and see students' diverse linguistic repertoire as valuable resources (Jain, 2014; Lee, 2014).

A lot of literature on this topic seemingly focuses on adapting the translingual approach in composition classrooms. While scholars have also debated whether the notion is a new thing (Canagarajah, 2013b, 2015, 2013c; Matsuda, 2014) and whether translingual writing and Second Language (L2) Writing are two distinct fields (Atkinson et al., 2015). For me, translingualism has added new understanding to my funds of knowledge (Gonzalez et al., 2005). Furthermore, I have become more interested in learning about my own linguistic repertoire as I consider myself multilingual. I have been using multiple languages daily ever since I was a kid. As I ponder about this, I always find it amazing to see people meshing different languages when they speak or write because this is, to me, a solid example of how meanings can be conveyed, although interlocutors might speak different languages, mainly when appropriate meaning-making strategies are employed.

Canagarajah (2011) has identified some teachable strategies for translanguaging, and I have personally experienced that acts of translanguaging can happen naturally. Most of the time, I do not necessarily choose which language(s) to mesh when I communicate with other multilinguals. In addition, I witnessed these kinds of interactions around me on a daily basis when I was living in the US as a Master's and doctoral student. For instance, Indonesian families living in the US could showcase perfect examples of how languages could be used creatively to meet different purposes. Therefore, I became interested in examining the everyday talks of an Indonesian family to see the strategies employed.

Although many studies on translingualism focus on writing pedagogy and other classroom instructions (e.g., Pacheco et al., 2019), studies on the kind of translingual practices in spoken languages and family language policy, especially within the context of Indonesian families living abroad, are relatively scarce. For this reason, I decided to work with an Indonesian family I know well. I have witnessed a lot of samples of translingual practices happening within this particular family. These practices would reveal more insights into translingualism if we look closely.

Some scholars have tried to define the term translingualism. Canagarajah's (2013b) work on this issue has shed a brighter light on the notion of translingual practice. Rather than using the term multilingual, which still separates languages into different compartments, he explains why translingual is a better term to describe the dynamic nature of languages and their speakers. Here, Canagarajah succinctly points out that even an English monolingual speaker is indeed a translingual because he or she speaks multiple registers, dialects, or discourses. This means he or she is engaging in some translingual practice when communicating.

Translingual practice can be seen as “the strategies of engaging with diverse codes, with the awareness that the shape of the final textual products will vary according to the contextual expectations” (Canagarajah, 2013b, p. 8). Canagarajah acknowledges that translingualism will not overlook “established norms and conventions,” but these norms and conventions will be negotiated by speakers or writers “as appropriate for one's interests and contexts, and gradual norm changes” (p.9).

In the same sense, Jain (2014) puts that translingualism “captures effectively the idea that languages are not as disparate as they made out to be, and that in an increasingly globalized world we see an intermeshing of languages in authentic contexts of language use far more than we see their separation” (p.493). Similarly, Lu and Horner (2013) consider “relations between language, language

users, and the temporal-spatial contexts and consequences language acts as co-constitutive” (p. 27) as one of the keys to understanding a translingual approach.

The scholars cited above are trying to convey that a translingual approach will enable us to go beyond the commonly believed compartmentalization (e.g., mono/multi and native/nonnative speakers) that has long existed in the field of language learning and teaching. Here, a translingual approach could be seen as the postcolonial and postmodern language use/learning.

As Canagarajah (2013b) points out that classrooms are the real examples of where complex translingual practices can happen, scholars like Motha et al. (2012) tried to provide an example of classroom-based “accounts” of translingual practice. They proposed the notion of “translinguistic identity-as-pedagogy.” Here, teachers experiencing learning and using multiple languages can use their translinguistic identity(ies) as pedagogical tools. In a later study, Jain (2014) reports on her practitioner study, where she tries to develop students’ translingual competence by using her translinguistic identity. In particular, she uses her conversations with the students in the classroom to “bring forth the (budding) translinguistic identities present in the room and create spaces for developing participants’ awareness of translingual practices across global English contexts” (495).

Much of the debate on translingualism happens in the field of Second Language Writing. This field is now geared toward postcolonial language learning or moving from “traditional approaches to writing,” which takes “as the norm a linguistically homogeneous situation: one where writers, speakers, and readers are expected to use Standard English or Edited American English – imagined ideally as uniform – to the exclusion of other languages and language variations” (Horner et al., 2011, p.303) despite the fact that the population of US classrooms, for instance, is getting more diverse from time to time.

Therefore, Horner et al. (2011) have proposed a translingual approach as a new paradigm. According to them, this new paradigm does not consider linguistic differences as problems that should be corrected, but they should be deemed as meaning-making resources when doing writing, speaking, reading, and listening activities. Here, Horner et al. (2011) ask a number of questions that would enable teachers, practitioners, or professionals in the field of second language writing to “honor the power of all language users, recognize the linguistic heterogeneity of all language users, and directly confront English monolingualist expectations by researching and teaching how writers can work with and against ... those expectation” (p.305).

While there is a growing number of proponents of translingual writing, critiques are also out there. Watson (2021) has tried to scrutinize the notion of translingualism from both sides, suggesting that it is both a disposition and practice. Matsuda (2014), one of the most prominent critics, believes that translingualism is a new concept. Many of its proponents are just trying to incorporate a concept they do not entirely understand in their recent works. According to Matsuda, people are interested in integrating translingualism in their work because it is “the moral imperative – people are drawn to translingual writing because it is the right thing to do” (p.480). For Matsuda, this phenomenon is some kind of “linguistic tourism.”

Some other L2 writing scholars have tried to narrow the gap between L2 writing and translingual writing. In their open letter, Atkinson et al. (2015) try to clarify the relationship between L2 writing

and translingual writing. They argue that L2 writing and translingual writing are not two separate fields competing against each other; one is not a better notion that replaces the old one. Therefore, they call for a more comprehensive understanding of both approaches in the writing field so that we will not “diminish the value of translingual approaches, but rather to call attention to the distinctions between translingualism and the field of L2 writing, while acknowledging overlaps as well” (p.385).

As one of the leading figures in the translingualism field, Canagarajah (2015) strongly refutes Matsuda’s (2014) argument and claims that the translingual approach is not “a new western-academic fad to romanticize diversity and novelty” (p.420). According to Canagarajah, Matsuda probably based his argument on the fact that translingualisms emerged only recently in American writing scholarship. Canagarajah contends that translingualism has been long practiced, even in traditionally monolingual countries. Translingualism is a “fact of life for millions of people in Asia, Africa, and the Americas, as they have struggled for centuries to preserve such language and literacy practices (p.419). In this regard, one can perhaps consider how people in multilingual countries like Indonesia have meshed languages when communicating for as long as they can remember.

In an earlier study, Canagarajah (2011) tried to identify some teachable strategies for translanguaging. In this study, Canagarajah specifically scrutinizes the translingual strategies employed by a Saudi Arabian student in her essay writing to address the need for teachable translanguaging strategies in the classrooms due to the many studies on translanguaging outside the school contexts that have taken place. According to Canagarajah, multilingual students may have developed the kind of translingual strategies on their own, but they need to move from their translanguaging acts because “translanguaging in literacy is more challenging than in speaking because ... translanguaging is heavily censored in literate contexts” (p.402), because formal writing is “high-stake” activity that would be assessed and evaluated.

After analyzing essays produced by the Saudi Arabian student, Canagarajah claims that the student, Buthainah, adopted four code-meshing strategies: *recontextualization*, *voice*, *interactional*, and *textualization* strategies. In his later works, such as Canagarajah (2013b), he renames those four strategies as *envoicing*, *recontextualization*, and *interactional*, and *extextualization* strategies. Though he slight changes the names of these micro strategies, the intended meaning of each strategy remains the same.

Theoretical Framework

I decided to employ translingual negotiation strategies: *envoicing*, *recontextualization*, *interactional*, and *extextualization* (Canagarajah, 2013a, 2013b) as the lens for my data analysis. Here, *envoicing* is understood as a strategy with which speakers encode their identities and “desire to be understood with all their social and cultural particularity” (Canagarajah, 2013b, p. 80). Canagarajah writes that identity is not an additional feature to communication, but it is “everything in communication.”

Recontextualization is then seen as a negotiation strategy used to frame talks or texts in order to change “footing” so that appropriate negotiation can happen. When interlocutors of diverse lin-

guistic and cultural backgrounds engage in communication, their might be confusion in regards to whose footing works. They, therefore, need to continuously negotiate their footing as the conversation progresses. Here, both interlocutors, as noted by Canagarajah, have to be “comfortable with their differences” (p.81). While *interactional* strategy means “a social activity of co-constructing meaning by adopting reciprocal and collaborative strategies” (p. 82). In this sense, interlocutors will bring whatever resources into the talks or texts and negotiate them to make (new) meanings. Finally, *entextualization* refers to “how speakers and writers monitor and manage their productive processes by exploiting the spatiotemporal dimensions of text” (p. 84) and talk for voice and intelligibility. According to Canagarajah (2013), these micro strategies are interrelated.

2. Method

I decided to work with Tony (*a pseudo name*), then a 15-year-old Indonesian multilingual speaker who lived with his multilingual parents. Tony and his mother came to America in June 2010 to accompany his father, who had already been in the US for his doctoral studies. At the time, he was ten years old and did not speak any English but was already multilingual as he could speak Javanese (*a dominant local language on the Island of Java*) and Indonesian (*the National Language of Indonesia*) very well. After his arrival, Tony relied very much on his interaction with peers living in the same neighborhood to practice his English.

In addition, both his father and mother did not necessarily teach him English or spoke to him in English. Therefore, both the father and mother continued speaking in either Javanese or Indonesian at home, making Tony learn English on his own and with the help of his friends. Tony significantly improved his English after he started attending classes. Tony was a 9th grader when I collected the data. He mostly spoke English, even with his own parents.

Why This Participant?

I met Tony and his parents in January 2015 when I started my doctoral program at a large Midwestern research university in the US. We lived in the same housing compound, so I often interacted with Tony and his parents. We oftentimes got involved in many gatherings or other communal activities attended by all Indonesian families living in the area. During these gatherings, I could observe how Tony utilized his language repertoire and resources with his peers and parents. It was clearly visible that Tony used English, Javanese, and Indonesian with different interlocutors. He smartly switched the language as he communicated with different people. I observed that Tony only used English when interacting with his peers (both American or non-American friends) and used English, Javanese, and Indonesian when interacting with his parents or other Indonesians who understand Javanese.

However, he would only use English and Indonesian when interacting with Indonesians who do not understand Javanese. For instance, he would use English and Indonesian when he talked to me because I did not understand Javanese. In fact, Tony would mostly use English though sometimes I asked questions in Indonesian. All in all, I could see that Tony was more comfortable talking in

English. He only responded in Indonesian or Javanese when his interlocutors used either language though he still tended to mix either language with English.

I was particularly interested in learning the kinds of reasons behind Tony's choice of language use. I wanted to know why he chose one language over the others or meshed all the languages at once. Tony once told me that he did not have any particular reasons why he chose to use one language over the other. He said that he just spoke whatever language that came to mind (especially when communicating with those who speak either English, Indonesia, or Javanese). Therefore, I wanted to explore the actual translingual practice in Tony's language use by audiotaping his everyday talks with his parents and analyzing transcribed audio data. Before getting his everyday talks audiotaped, I sought approval from Tony himself and his parents. At this point, an informed consent form was presented.

Question of the Research

This research examines this simple question: *What kinds of translingual negotiation strategies do an Indonesian multilingual family practice, and what do these practices inform us about communicative intelligibility and success in a contact zone?*

Data Collection

To get adequate data and answer the question above, I audiotape samples of Tony's everyday talks with his father or mother. To get richer data, I also interviewed Tony's parents to understand the family's linguistic backgrounds and their view of their multilingualism.

After getting approval from both Tony and his parents, I told Tony and his parents that I would audiotape samples of their actual everyday talks whenever they had time. I noticed that I might need to follow the family to get the data audiotaped. I went fishing at a nearby lake with Tony and his father, Martin, one afternoon to try to record their conversation using my cell phone.

Unfortunately, I failed to get the father and son to talk during the fishing trip because we were too busy fishing, and Tony stood far away from his father, so he only did minimal talking.

Realizing that it might be difficult for me to get their actual everyday talks recorded, Martin offered to help audiotape his conversations with his son because it would be easier for him to do so because they were usually together most of the time. That being said, I would not have to follow them to get the data needed. I was thrilled, and I gladly accepted the kind offer.

Several days later, Martin emailed me two sample recordings (each is about 15 minutes long). I then decided to transcribe the second audio recording, which was seemingly more intelligible. In the recording, the father and son talk about a soccer game Tony has just watched. At the time, Martin had just picked up his son from the soccer game and was driving him home. At first, the father and son specifically talked about the soccer game but soon switched to different topics such as junk food and basketball game.

Several weeks later, I invited Martin to do a short interview with me, and he agreed to participate. During this interview, I showed him the transcription of his conversation with his son, and I

started asking retrospectively afterward. As this interview was only intended to get some additional triangulated data, I only briefly interviewed Martin, about 6-7 minutes in length.

Transcription and Member Checking

Because the 15-minute audio recording contains a lot of data, I only transcribed and analyzed about 10-minute worth of data. I had difficulties transcribing the audiotaped data because the recording quality was not very good, and I did not understand Javanese made the transcription even harder. I then turned to Tony and his father for help. With their assistance, I could finally come up with the correct transcription.

In addition to inviting the father and son to do the member checking, I also asked Martin to help translate Javanese into Indonesian to help me understand when they conversed in Javanese. This whole process took about two weeks. To help me analyze the raw transcribed data, I made three separate columns on Excel Spreadsheet. The columns indicate actual utterances, Indonesian translations, and English translations. The actual utterances are in red, the Indonesian translation is in green, and the English translation is colored blue.

Because I did not understand Javanese, I only provided Indonesian translations for Javanese sentences, phrases, or words. In contrast, English translation was provided for Indonesian and Javanese sentences, phrases, or words, so readers from wider backgrounds could understand them. I, nonetheless, removed the Indonesian translation for all utterances I quoted in the next section of this writing. To better understand, I put English translation in brackets, *italicized* it, and put it next to the actual utterance. As for the transcription of the interview data, I did not ask Martin for help as I could transcribe the data on my own because I interviewed him in English.

3. Results and discussion

I coded and categorized the everyday talk data into four major themes that fit into the four micro strategies discussed above (*envoicing, recontextualization, interactional, and entextualization*). I also coded and categorized the interview data into three major themes: *being multilinguals, identity, and access to resources*. I discussed these below.

3.1. Everyday talks

In the following excerpt, we can see Tony using both English and Indonesian to respond to his father, who has a negative opinion about the soccer team he supports (North High School Soccer Team). Here, the letter M refers to Martin, and T refers to Tony.

M : Dadine ki menang endi e? (*Who won the game at the end?*)

T : South

M : Payah tenan kok nggonanmu ki (*Your team is really terrible*)

T : Adu pinalti man! (*It was a penalty shootout, man!*) It was such a good game

It is interesting to see how T (Tony) mashes Indonesian expression with an English word (*adu pinalti man!*). The expression simply means Tony's team did not lose the game easily. The team only lost after some penalty shootouts. He disagrees with his father who says in Javanese that Tony's team is no good. He believes that his team has played well. The fact that he does not respond in Javanese is particularly interesting to me because the expression "*adu pinalti man!*" can be very rude if it is said entirely in Javanese. In Javanese culture, parents and older persons should be highly respected. One way to respect them is by using proper words when addressing them (e.g., using the word "*Pak*" which means sir or dad).

Here, Tony is trying to voice out his position and opinion by using a different "code" so that he might not sound rude to his father while maintaining his position. I think Tony is using a very unique "*envoicing*" strategy here, and it seems to have worked well as Martin does not comment on his son's word choices. In this sense, Canagarajah (2013) asserts that *envoicing* strategy would enable a speaker to "accentuate their differences from others by moving away from uniform uses and shared norms. Such strategies provide each of them an identity and voice" (p.89).

In the following excerpt, we can see how Martin (M) recontextualizes the talk by reminding Tony not to have junk food. He takes the opportunity to do so after Tony mentions the price of the soccer game ticket and reports that he spent the leftover money on popcorn.

M : *Tikete regane pira? (How much was the ticket?)*

T : Five bucks. I buy popcorn

M : You buy popcorn?

T : Yeah five

M : *Payah tenan kok kowe di dikandhani. Mbak ra! (It's difficult to tell you to not [buy junk food].* Don't!)*

T : One dollar

M : *One dollar one dollar. Ora kon jajan kok. Aja sok jajanan kaya ngono lah. Kudune kowe sangu seko ngomah ki lho. (One dollar one dollar. I told you not to buy junk food. Don't buy such junk food. You should bring [snacks] from home)*

T : No

M : *Ngeyel banget. Aja ngeyel ki lho. (You're really stubborn. Don't be stubborn)*

* words or phrases in [] are added

Here, Martin recontextualizes the topic and uses it to remind Tony not to buy popcorn (junk food) right after Tony willingly reports that he had used the leftover money to buy popcorn. Rather than elaborating their talk around the ticket price, Martin, in Javanese, reiterates yet another piece of advice about not buying junk food. As suggested by Canagarajah (2013), Martin clearly managed to frame this face-to-face conversation the way he wanted it, which is by advising his son. I think Martin keeps saying his advice in Javanese because it is much more comfortable for him to remind his son in his home language. Personally, I have often been faced with such a situation. Instead of using English, I tended to use Indonesian to advise my daughter when she misbehaved. I felt that my intended message would be well-conveyed if I talked in Indonesian.

Realizing that he had done something his father does not like, Tony quickly negotiates by saying that he only spent one dollar for the popcorn. This, however, does not change the “footing” in his favor because Martin, in fact, continued reminding Tony to bring food or snacks from home. We can totally understand this; as a father, he wants his son to eat healthier food. For him, bringing food from home can be one way to ensure that Tony is eating well. Yet, Tony did not seem to comply as he said “no,” and this prompted Martin to tell Tony not to be stubborn.

Then, the data also shows the application of Interactional Strategy. In the following excerpt, Tony utilizes the “let-it-pass” strategy when his father makes a mistake. Tony goes on and provides further explanation of what a “slow board” is. Consider Tony’s strategy below.

- T : Oo look at the guy. He has the Flowboard
M : Slowboard ki apa to? (*What's the Slowboard?*)
T : It's like oh. It has it
M : Slowboard ki apa? (*What's the Slowboard?*)
T : It's like uhm Segway
M : Segway ki apa? (*What's Segway?*)
T : Something you ride on, and it moves. You stand on it.
M : Tenane? (*Is that right?*)
T : Yes, I just saw it oh my God. This is, you know how much it costs, right?
M : No.
T : Like eight hundred bucks. I will get it
M : No way
T : Yes, so cool, man!

The quote highlights how Tony adopts the “let-it-pass” strategy when his father mispronounces the slow board. Even though his father repeats the wrong pronunciation twice, Tony does not correct his father but tries to explain the mispronounced word by using another word (Segway), so the conversation can proceed. When Martin asks what Segway is, Tony then provides a further explanation by giving more description. Here, Tony provides his explanation all in English, which indicates that he finds it more comfortable to explain in English (though it might be a new concept to his interlocutor; in this case, the Flowboard and Segway are new things for his father).

It is even more interesting to see how Tony tries to get his father to agree to buy the Flow board for him. He does this after making sure that his father understands what the Flowboard board is. Even though his strategy fails to convince his father, this shows how he intelligently waits for the right moment to get his idea across.

Similar to the interactional strategies employed above, Martin and Tony also seemingly engaged in the entextualization strategy. Please consider the following excerpt:

- M : Mbiyen kae apa? (*what kind of game was then?*)
T : Mbiyen kae was like I don't know. Columbus something. That's so close man!
(*Back then was like I don't know. Columbus something. That's so close man!*)
M : So close what?
T : The goalie for South it's so cocky
M : Cocky ki apa? (*what's cocky*)
T : Cocky ya cocky, like you think he's the best
M : Sing South? (*South team?*)
T : Yeah

Here, we can see how Tony tries to explain the meaning of a colloquial word to his father. The father does not seem to understand the word “cocky” that his son uses though perhaps the conversation was still within the same context (i.e., about the soccer game). He asks what the word “cocky” means in Javanese. At first, Tony did not find the right words to explain what “cocky” meant as he only said “cocky ya cocky.” Maybe he soon realized that his father really did not understand what the word meant, so he immediately explained the word in much simpler English words.

The father, who now seemingly understands, asks another question in Javanese about what team is considered the best. Perhaps this is to confirm whether he understands the word correctly. Although this interaction might also be an example of an interactional strategy, the fact that Tony uses simpler language to explain his point can, too, be considered an entextualization strategy. This is as argued by Canagarajah (2013b), “entextualization strategies show that interlocutors have an orientation to language and texts as evolving in time and space” (p.105). It is interesting to note here that Tony did not try to use Javanese when explaining his points to his father though the father asked him in Javanese. The pattern I see is that Tony would use English when he has to explain complex things to others. As I said earlier, he seems more comfortable using English than Javanese or Indonesian.

3.2. Interview

As I mentioned earlier, I conducted a brief interview with the father, Martin, to gain better insights into the family's translanguaging practice. Below discuss some major themes of the interview data.

Being Multilingual

My follow-up interview with the father, Martin, revealed a number of interesting facts regarding his plans for his son's language learning. Consider the following quote:

“I want him to be able to use many different languages. For example, I use uhm Javanese, sometimes Indonesian, so that he can keep all the languages alive. English, I don't care because he already knows English and, at school, he speaks English.”

The quote reveals the father's desire to make his son multilingual. As has been said, the son, Tony, was already bilingual when he came to the US years ago. As he is now more versed in English, he uses English almost all the time, seemingly showing less interest in using his mother tongue. This is, in fact, what drives Martin and his wife to consistently talk to their son in their home languages so that these languages will continue to survive.

As a multilingual Indonesian living in the US, I think this makes sense. I want my children to learn and keep our home languages, especially when exposed to the dominant language (English). I understand that my children might not be able to balance their bi/multilingualism, but, at least, they will still know home languages (though more passive than English). Therefore, they would be able to (re)learn to use their home languages when their surrounding requires them to (e.g., when they return to Indonesia).

Identity

Martin also associates his mother tongues with his and his son's identity. This is evidenced in the following quote:

"Javanese, yeah it's important because it's our own culture and uhm everybody in the family, actually in Java, in Yogyakarta we also speak Javanese so it is very important for us to keep the language, and he needs to know the language."

Many would agree with Martin's statement above because languages will very much say something about someone's identity. I would definitely consider my mother tongue as a part of my identity. Therefore, I need to keep my mother tongue alive; this is also true when teaching languages to my children.

In this sense, May (2012) writes there are at least three reasons why language has a significant relationship to ethnic and national identity.

"First, there is considerable evidence that, while language may not be a determining feature of ethnic and national identity, it remains nonetheless a significant one in many instances. Second, the cultural significance of language to ethnic and national identity may help to explain its political prominence in many ethnic and ethnonationalist movements. Third, language construction and/or reconstruction may well be a somewhat arbitrary process at times. Nonetheless, a certain linguistic arbitrariness does not, ipso facto, diminish the affective and/or political importance of the languages" (May 2012, pp.135-136).

Therefore, in this regard, it is very understandable if Martin takes the teaching or preservation of his mother tongue as an important endeavor that he insisted on using Javanese with his son whenever he could.

Access to resources.

For Martin, competency in his mother tongue also means access to many resources within his community back home in Indonesia. This is especially important for him and his family because he and his family will eventually return to Indonesia. The following quote explains this:

“I also want him to know more about the root of our cultural root as Javanese, as Indonesian. That’s important because then it can also, using the language, he can also access our good resources, many good resources in our culture.”

The statement makes a lot of sense as Martin’s community in Java Island depends very much on the use of Javanese in their daily conversations. Upon returning to Indonesia, Tony might have an issue communicating and mingling with his same-aged peers or with some elders in his father’s extended family if he does not understand Javanese. If he can communicate with them, he can easily access different kinds of resources or be accepted in the community. Many people living in rural areas in Java do not necessarily understand and/or speak Indonesian as a national, so competence in Javanese is essential to “survive” in such an environment. For example, Tony could use his Javanese to accomplish simple shopping activities.

This is also the case in my context. Many people in my village are not very well-versed in Indonesian, let alone English. They mostly communicate in Acehese, an ethnic language in Aceh Province, where I originally come from. This is why I want my children to learn my mother tongue. If they cannot speak the language, it might be difficult for them to fit in and access all resources others in our community enjoy.

4. Conclusion

The data analysis above shows how Tony and Martin smartly use their language resources to adopt the envoicing, recontextualization, interactional, and entextualization strategies and create new meanings. As suggested by Canagarajah (2013), “the words and grammatical items they use are functional and serve powerful social and rhetorical purposes” (p.105). The father and the son have successfully conveyed their intended meanings. Their language repertoire and resources are certainly beneficial here. This is an example of how translinguals can use their language capabilities to move from one language to another (in whatever strategies they want) to reach their communicative goals. As indicated by Martin in our interview, their translingual practices also highlight their multilingual identities and the kinds of resources available to them.

This study is certainly far from complete, but I believe that take it as my entry that can propel me to conduct more in-depth research to gain a deeper understanding of the notion of translingualism. Future researchers can also build on the findings of this present study to further fill the existing gaps so we can better understand this very topic. With this deeper understanding of the notion of translingualism, English teachers could provide better instructions in their teaching, the instruction that can help multilingual students learn and benefit from their multilingualism. Hopefully, this will allow the teachers to not be like those scholars who incorporate a new idea that they do not fully understand, as argued by Matsuda (2014).

5. References

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