

Measuring Proficiency in Standard Indonesian for Enggano Speakers

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ABSTRACT

The Indonesian language is a symbol of national identity that has been used to unify the nation. In general, most Indonesian people are bilingual or multilingual. A large number of Indonesians speak both a vernacular language and Indonesian, and many also speak an international language. The existence of hundreds of vernacular languages in Indonesia has been documented by research, including that conducted by the Indonesia Language Center and Research Department or *Pusat Bahasa* (Sugondo, et al. 2008) and SIL International (Gordon 2005). Even though vernacular languages are spoken in most areas of the country from the island of Sumatra to Papua, Indonesian is still strongly used in certain domains, mostly in formal situations, such as in the domains of government and education. The main purpose of study described in this paper was to measure the proficiency of Standard Indonesian spoken in Enggano Island, Bengkulu Province, Indonesia. Enggano is spoken in six villages: Malakoni, Apoho, Meok, Ka'ana, Kayapu and Banjar. Of these, two villages-- Meok and Ka'ana-- were selected as research sites for collecting data. The instrument used to measure the proficiency of Standard Indonesian was the Indonesian Sentence Repetition Test (ISRT) (Hanawalt 2008). A sociolinguistics questionnaire was also used to investigate the language situation and demographic factors that affect the community's bilingual proficiency, such as level of education, age, inter-ethnic contact, media exposure, and gender. The study results show an average bilingual proficiency in Standard Indonesian of level 2 on the ILR scale (Interagency Language Roundtable 2007) for Enggano speakers, which indicates an ability to use Indonesian limited to particular situations and domains. The analysis also shows that bilingual proficiency in Enggano varies on average between males and females and is influenced by education and age, but not by the other factors investigated. This means that bilingual proficiency in Standard Indonesian for Enggano speakers is largely the result of continuing on to higher levels of education. Even though the average proficiency of Enggano speakers in Standard Indonesian is at level 2, the attitudes of most Enggano speakers towards both the Indonesian language and the local vernacular language are strongly positive.

1. BILINGUALISM / MULTILINGUALISM IN INDONESIA. In the Indonesian context, most people use the Indonesian language as a medium for communication in formal situations, while vernacular languages are used in informal situations and isolated areas. The country currently faces the challenge of how to maintain both Indonesian and vernacular languages. A large number of Indonesians speak both a vernacular language (L1) and Indonesian (L2), and many also speak an international language. Thus most people in Indonesia are bilingual or multilingual. Limited research has been conducted to quantitatively measure the Standard Indonesian (hereafter BI) proficiency level of second-language speakers of Indonesian. Even though in many parts in Indonesia it is reported that people are bilingual in, little has been done to investigate the actual level of Indonesian proficiency throughout the nation. This means that more bilingualism research is necessary, especially that conducted with research tools which can quantitatively measure the proficiency level of Standard Indonesian in a certain speech community.

2. INTRODUCTION TO THE SENTENCE REPETITION TEST. A Sentence Repetition Test (SRT) is a type of bilingualism test for large-scale assessment of second-language (L2) proficiency. It is used to gain an objective and general assessment of a person's proficiency in a second language, not an in-depth analysis of one person's strengths or weaknesses in that L2 (Radloff 1991: 8). The Indonesian Sentence Repetition Test (ISRT) score has been calibrated against the OPI (Oral Proficiency Interview), which is considered as one of the most reliable tests in measuring the bilingual proficiency (see Hanawalt 2008).ⁱ

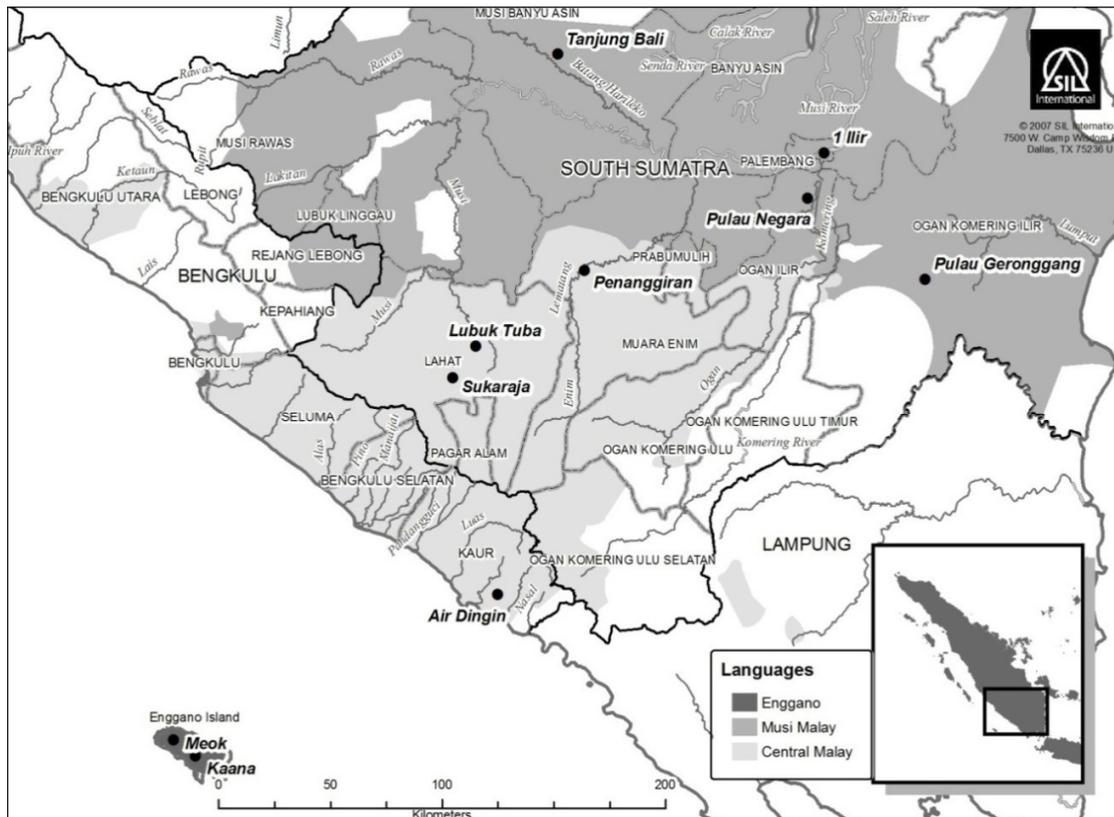
Table 1. Correlation Between ISRT Score and ILR Level (Hanawalt 2008:18)

ISRT Total Score	OPI (ILR) Level
0-4	0
5-7	0.6 (0+)
8-12	1
13-15	1.6 (1+)
16-20	2
21-24	2.6 (2+)
25-29	3
30-32	3.6 (3+)
33-37	4
38-40	4.6 (4+)
41-54	5

3. BILINGUALISM TESTING ON ENGGANO ISLAND

3.1 Geography and People. The Indonesia archipelago consists of more than 17,000 islands from the island of Sumatera to Papua. Among these is Enggano, an isolated island located to the south west of Sumatra Island. Administratively, Enggano has status as a sub-district of the regency of North Bengkulu in Bengkulu Province. The six villages of Enggano, located from southeast to northwest, are Kayapu, Ka'ana, Malakoni, Apoho, Meok, and Banjarsari.

Figure 1: Map of South Sumatra and Bengkulu Province



According to Ethnologue (Gordon 2005:435), Enggano [eno], or Engganese (its alternate name), is classified as Enggano, Sumatera, Malayo-Polynesian, Austronesian. It is spoken on Enggano Island and on four smaller nearby islands. No other languages are reported to be closely related to it.

3.2 Survey Procedures. Two research tools were used to gather data to fulfill the research goal: a Bilingualism questionnaire, and the ISRT (Indonesian Sentence Repetition Test).

3.3 Sampling. Random sampling was applied in each level of the sampling procedures to ensure the validity and representativeness of the collected data.

3.3.1 Village Sampling. The villages that were selected as research sites at least 75% of the residents who were native Enggano speakers. They are Meok and Ka'ana. The villages located 10km or less to the nearest high school and villages located 20km or more to the nearest high school.

3.3.2 Household sampling. A systematic sampling method was used. The total respondents were tested was 62, which 27 in Ka'ana, and 35 in Meok. For example, if there were 150 houses in a village, 150 were divided by 30 and so every 5th house was chosen.

3.3.3 Respondent Sampling. A respondent between the ages of 15 to 60 was chosen in each household using the KISH grid.

4. RESULTS

4.1 Average BI Proficiency. The overall average OPI or ILRⁱⁱ levels for BI bilingual proficiency of the Enggano is on level 2 (Limited Working Performance). According to the International Language Roundtable (2007) a person with language proficiency of level 2 is able to converse about routine or predictable subject matter, but sometimes require repetition or clarification.

Table 2. Percentage of respondents with BI proficiency at ILR Level 3

Language	Percentage of respondents at or above ILR3	Percentage of respondents below ILR3
Enggano	21%	79%

The above table shows the percentage of Enggano respondents who are at or above ILR 3 in BI. Less than one-third of the population in all clusters is at or above ILR 3 (Professional Performance). The Enggano language group is therefore not predicted to be adequately proficient to use language materials exclusively in BI as defined in Sanders (2004): “80% or more of a cross-section of the language community (ages 20-45) speak a second language (L2) at a proficiency level of 3+ or above and this second language is used in a sustainable manner.” Thus, vernacular language materials may have benefit for the Enggano community.

4.1 Social and Demographic Factors. As shown in Table 3 below, the factors investigated can be grouped into two categories.

ⁱⁱⁱ**Table 3.** Results of Multiple Variable Regression Analysis for Relationship with BI Proficiency

<u>Variable</u>	<u>Coefficient</u>	<u>Std Error</u>	<u>F-test</u>	<u>P-Value</u>
Years of Education	1.266	0.136	86.6471	0.000000
Age	-0.086	0.036	5.6390	0.018142
Exposure to Literature	0.683	0.411	2.7689	0.097068
Contact with	0.389	0.287	1.8315	0.176882
Gender	0.503	0.828	0.3698	0.543534
Distance From School	-0.035	0.093	0.1409	0.707676
Travel Frequency	-0.101	0.465	0.0469	0.828677

Exposure to Radio	0.047	0.329	0.0204	0.886526
Contact with Outsiders	0.014	0.119	0.0138	0.906444
Exposure to Television	0.039	0.489	0.0062	0.937037

4.1.1 Statistically Significant Factors

Of factors investigated, there are only two statistically significant factors which were shown to influence respondents' ISRT results: years of education and age.

4.1.2 Years of Education. The multiple regression analysis showed a positive correlation between years of education and bilingual proficiency in Indonesia.

Table 4. Categories for Level of Education

Level of Education	Ages	Years of Education
Elementary	7-12	1-6
Junior High School	13-15	7-9
Senior High School	16-18	10-12
University	19 or more	13 or more

Table 5. ILR Levels by Education

Level of Education	Enggano
	ILR Level
Elementary	1+
Junior High	2
Senior High	2+
University	*

Table 5 shows ILR level of Indonesian proficiency for respondents by education in Enggano. This means that the bilingual proficiency level is apparently increasing when respondents have higher levels of education.

4.1.3. Age. In Table 6 below, the respondents were divided into two age groups: Young and Old. It is likely that the difference in BI proficiency between the two age groups is caused by variance in level of education.

Table 6. ILR Levels by Age

Age	ILR level
Young (15-35)	2+
Old (36-60)	1+

On average individuals in the Young group are more proficient in BI than those in the Old group. In Table 3, the coefficient value for the independent variable age is negative, meaning that higher age correlates with lower SRT score.

4.1.4. Statistically Insignificant Factors. Eight of the ten social and demographic factors investigated in this study were shown to be statistically insignificant and were not proven to influence BI bilingual proficiency in the study sample. These factors were: exposure to literature, length of time spent outside community, gender, distance from school, travel frequency, exposure to radio, contact with outsiders, and exposure to television.

5. CONCLUSION.

Education plays an essential role in the life of Enggano speakers, and also has a strong factor in increasing bilingual Indonesian proficiency. In the study sample it appears that higher levels of education increase a person's bilingual proficiency in Indonesian. Even though the average level of Indonesian proficiency for Enggano speakers can be described as Limited Working Performance (level 2), their attitudes towards both Indonesian and the local vernacular language are strongly positive. This can be seen from their motivation to still uses Indonesian in the domains of education and government while using the vernacular is mostly in the domain of home. Additionally, for Enggano speakers, Indonesian is used for continuing higher education, while the vernacular needs to be maintained as part of Enggano culture so that it can be passed on to the younger generation.

6. BIBLIOGRAPHY

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Personal Information

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ⁱ The OPI was first used by the United States Foreign Service Institute (FSI) to evaluate an individual's L2 proficiency (Radloff 1991: 47). In the OPI, an individual's proficiency in L2 is described with a range of ILR (Interagency Language Roundtable) levels from 0 (No Performance) to 5 (Master Professional Performance). The correlation between ISRT score and ILR level as measured by the OPI is shown in Table 1 below.

ⁱⁱ Interegancy Roundtable Language

ⁱⁱⁱ If the p-value resulting from the multiple variable regression analysis is less than 0.05, the factor is considered to have a statistically significant relationship with ISRT score, and if the p-value is greater than 0.05 the relationship between this factor and ISRT score is considered statistically insignificant.