

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the introduction of the research. It consists of seven sections: background of the research, statement of problems, purpose of the research, scope of the research, significance of the research, clarification of key terms, and organization of the paper.

### 1.1 Background of the Research

Indonesia is a multilingual speech community, which has Indonesian language as their standard language and many regional languages as their vernacular language. According to Sensus (2010), Indonesia has 1158 vernacular languages. However, this number of languages is apparently decreasing due to the non-existence of the speakers of particular vernacular languages in Indonesia. As stated in Sensus (2010), "There are 14 languages that have become extinct in Indonesia and there are also many regional languages in Indonesia whose speakers are under 100." This phenomenon may lead to what is called a language endangerment, a situation where a language is heading towards extinction, which happens when its speakers stop using it. UNESCO (2003) further explains that if a language is not documented before this happens, it can never be revived again.

Language endangerment is caused by both external and internal forces (UNESCO, 2013). External forces include military, technology, economic, religious, cultural and educational subjugation, while internal forces mainly refer to the speakers' own negative attitudes towards their language. In order to survive, endangered languages need a meaningful role in the host society, preferably on all three levels of community, nation and the international setting.

One of the most known vernacular languages in Indonesia that is possibly experiencing this phenomenon is Sundanese language, a language that is used in the West Java area. Recently, the Sundanese people, especially the teenagers, show a negative attitude towards Sundanese language (Indrayani, 2011). The language that Sundanese people use today begins to change: they do not simply

Gitta Annisa Auni, 2018

*THE USE OF SUNDANESE SLANG BY TEENAGERS IN AN INTERNET- BASED CHAT APPLICATION*

Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia | repository.upi.edu | perpustakaan.upi.edu

speak in their ethnic language for many of them also speak in Indonesian as their national language. To an extent, they even communicate in English as their foreign language. Although the government already issued a regulation about how Sundanese people should use, maintain, and develop Sundanese language (as stated in PERDA Kota Bandung, 2012), this endangerment phenomenon is actually still happening.

One of the reasons why the Sundanese keep their negative attitude is perhaps because there is an assumption that if people use Indonesian in their daily activities, others will consider them as a member of the higher group of a society. Nonetheless, if they use an ethnic language in everyday activities, people will then brand them as a member of the lower-class society. These two assumptions appear to cause the youth to forget their ethnic language, the language that they grew up with. As a matter of fact, as Labov (1998) argues, vernacular language is actually the variety of speech used by individuals in casual social interactions with peers. It is always the variety one learns first, many speakers stay monodialectal in it all their lives even though it is typically of low prestige.

It is true that a change in language use is not unusual because language can develop easily. Hickey (2003) even claims that all languages change. There is no such thing as a language which does not change. However, if this case is not taken seriously, it may eventually endanger the existence of the particular vernacular language; in this case, the Sundanese language.

Other than the speakers' negative attitude, another recent factor that may influence language endangerment is the Internet. Crystal (2001) states that there is already a widespread popular myth that the Internet is going to be bad for the future of language that technospeak will rule, standards be lost, and creativity diminished as globalization imposes sameness. The Internet has now been around long enough for people to 'take a view' about the way in which it is being shaped by and is shaping language and languages. The way language is used online, especially when it is used by the youth, generally differs from both the way it is used in formal writing and in speech. Language that the teenagers use online tends

to contain significantly more slang than written language in other contexts (Coleman, 2012 in Lundell, 2012).

Munro (1997, as cited in Mattiello, 2015) says that slang is included in non-standard language as the sort of words and expressions which anyone might use in conversation or a letter, but which is not used in a speech or formal essay. Slang in itself is not something brand new. Nevertheless, some features of the language used in instant messaging conversations are completely new. The language online, which Crystal (2001) calls 'netspeak', contains a new kind of initialism, which is the general term for acronyms, abbreviations, and multi-word phrases that are compressed into a single word. Slang changes rapidly, and this change is mostly caused by teenagers and young adults. Older people also use slang but they are generally not bothered with keeping their language fashionable, and thus opt for using words that already exist in their vocabularies (Andersson & Trudgill, 1992).

The Internet, in this case, seems to have become an opiate for Indonesian people, especially among adolescents. APJII (2016) states that the Indonesian teenagers frequently use the social media on the Internet for almost 24 hours. The use of slang on social media by the Sundanese teenagers in every day life may become a factor which can either hasten or hamper the language endangerment of Sundanese language. Since the youth are the generation expected to maintain their language, if the Sundanese youth prefer to communicate by using many slang on social media, there is a chance that the proper Sundanese language can no longer be maintained. Therefore, although Crystal (2001) claims that the Internet and slang are in fact providing unprecedented opportunities for personal creativity, the use of the Internet by teenagers may actually be a major threat for Sundanese language vitality.

Many case studies on this particular topic have been conducted. However, they were mostly conducted within the scope of national and standard language, for example studies conducted by Salma (2013) and Muzayyanah (2015). A clear statement about slang language phenomenon that occurs in vernacular (regional)

language, especially in Sundanese language, in this case, is not apparent. In fact, Sundanese slang (or known as *bahasa okem*) has been widely used by the Sundanese community since 1970, especially the teenagers (Warsa, 2013). Nonetheless, based on the researcher's Internet research, there is almost no studies about Sundanese slang that can be found. Moreover, previous studies about slang are mostly examine the slang used in movie script and song. There are also studies that examine the use of slang on social media such as Facebook, Twitter, and Blackberry Messenger. Nevertheless, there is only a few studies which focused on social media "LINE".

Therefore, the focus of this study is on investigating the Sundanese slang which is used by teenagers in Bandung, especially in the context of internet-based communication applications. Hence, I have built this study on two different theoretical frameworks. The first theory is based on Allan and Burrige (2006) about types of slang. Another framework which is used to strengthen the present research is the theory of Holmes (2013) regarding the factors that influence the teenagers to use the slang language. Hence, an Internet-based chat application and a group of teenagers were particularly chosen for the research.

## **1.2 Statements of Problems**

Language is one of the nation heritages which must always be guarded by the people of the nation. To guard it, people are expected to use the language as often as possible. One country that has many language varieties is Indonesia, in which the language variety is called as vernacular or regional language. Regional languages in Indonesia are still often used, especially by adults. However, Indrayani (2011) states that there are many cases of teenagers who have begun to forget their local language. These children tend to forget their local language simply because they feel embarrassed when they communicate in their regional language. The statement is in line with Labov (1998) who also defines vernacular language as the variety of speech used by individuals in casual social interactions with peers, it is always the variety one learns first, and it is typically of low prestige.

Moreover, there is a theory from Crystal (2001) who states that online language or ‘netspeak’, contains more slang language in a new kind of initialism, which is the general term for acronyms. This case, and particular theory on it, attracted my attention to conduct an investigation about one of the vernacular languages in Indonesia, which is Sundanese language. Hence, these are the research questions that guided my study:

1. What types of Sundanese slang do the teenagers use to communicate on “LINE” application?
2. What are the possible factors that influence the way teenagers use Sundanese slang language on “LINE” application the most?

### **1.3 Purposes of the Research**

The research aims to investigate the types of Sundanese slang which are used in a single chat application, in the form of written language, by teenagers in Bandung. It also aims to investigate which factors are generated from the Sundanese slang used by teenagers on “LINE” application.

### **1.4 Scope of the Research**

The research focuses on analyzing the Sundanese slang that is used by Sundanese teenagers who are 12th grader students of one senior high school in Bandung. It is limited to identify types and factors of slang used on the Internet based chat application, called “LINE”. The group consisted of 41 female and male students whose ages is in the middle of 16 – 18 year old. The analysis focuses on two major theories: types of slang proposed by Allan and Burridge (2006) and factors that cause the use of slang proposed by Holmes (2013).

### **1.5 Significance of the Research**

The research is significant theoretically and practically. Theoretically, the present research is expected to provide a clear explanation about types and factors of slang Sundanese which are used on an Internet-based chat application by Sundanese high school students in Bandung. Practically, the present research is

important to be carried out because the result of this study can enrich the literature of slang language especially the Sundanese slang for students of sociolinguistics courses and become reference for further research.

### **1.6 Clarification of Terms**

To avoid misunderstanding, this research provides some key terms which proposed by some scholars. The key terms are as follows:

#### **1. Language Endangerment**

Bello (2013) defines “endangered language” as a language that is threatened by extinction. The threat may come because the number of speakers is declining rapidly. This is because the younger generation is not learning to speak it, or because the language is not used regularly in the language community (that is the location where the language is spoken).

#### **2. Language Variation.**

Language variety may be defined as a set of linguistic items with similar social distribution (Hudson, 1996). In addition, Fishman (2014) explains that from the aspect of speaker, language variety is divided in five parts: dialect, register, jargon, style, and slang.

#### **3. Slang.**

It is important to underline that the term “slang” was firstly recognized by Grose in 1785 (Fasola, 2012). According to Allan and Burridge (2006), slang is language of a highly colloquial and contemporary type. Slang is also often considered as informal and deemed inferior to the standard speech. As speech styles, slang are all used to signal informality and membership in a group. Swan (1995, as cited in Salma, 2013), also defines slang as a informal kind of vocabulary, used mostly in speech by people who know each other well.

### **1.7 Organization of the Research Paper**

In this study, the chapters are divided into five. The chapters are as follows:

1. Chapter I Introduction: this chapter presents background of the study, statements of problems, purposes of the research, scope of the study,

significance of the study, clarification of key terms, and also organization of paper in this study.

2. Chapter II Literature Review: this chapter describes theoretical foundation to answers the research questions of this study and some previous studies related to the study.
3. Chapter III Research Method: this chapter discusses the method, the steps and procedures in collecting the data.
4. Chapter IV Findings and Discussion: this chapter explains the discussion and findings of this study.
5. Chapter V Conclusion and Suggestions: this chapter contains the conclusion and suggestions regarding to the result of this study