

# Participatory Methods for Language Documentation and Conservation: Building Community Awareness and Engagement

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This paper describes three participatory methods to engage communities in research, planning, implementation, and evaluation of language programs for their own benefit. These methods facilitate investigation of sociolinguistic phenomena to inform and spur planning for effective language initiatives. In guided discussion sessions, community members build visual representations of collective knowledge about their language and language practices using text, symbols, and pictures. They are then invited to react to the results and discuss changes they would like to see in their situation. In the first activity, participants build a map of language variation, intelligibility, and language attitudes in their community. In the second activity, patterns of bilingualism among demographic subgroups are diagrammed and analyzed by the community. In the third activity, the community creates a diagram of their language use in various domains. Several pilot tests of the methods were conducted with minority language speakers in Malaysia and Indonesia. Using participatory methods is a valuable process that builds community awareness and engagement with language conservation issues. The process of thinking critically about their own language situation is a step from passivity towards engagement that creates an opportunity for the community to participate in, shape, and own collaborative initiatives for their language.

**1. INTRODUCTION.**<sup>1</sup> Beginning in September 2008, SIL International held a series of training sessions in participatory methods to address our own felt need to better engage minority language communities and other key stakeholders in SIL's language development initiatives throughout Asia. SIL facilitates language development with minority language communities through linguistic research, translation, and literacy (see Quakenbush 2007 for background on SIL International's activities that focus on Austronesian languages). The movement toward participatory methods was motivated by a desire to explore how language development initiatives—including language documentation and conservation—can be done more collaboratively with more sustainable benefits to the communities in which

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<sup>1</sup> A previous version of this paper was presented at the 1st International Conference on Language Documentation & Conservation held at the University of Hawai'i at Mānoa, March 12–14, 2009. We would like to thank Sue Hasselbring for her encouragement to write this paper, as well as Chari Viloría, RynJean Gonzales, Rindu Simanjuntak, and many other colleagues whose involvement in participatory methods training and discussion greatly enriched our understanding of these topics.

we serve. Sue Hasselbring, Sociolinguistics Consultant for SIL Asia Area, was instrumental in organizing and developing the content of these trainings, and in facilitating wider discussion about the use of participatory methods in language programs. The methods and pilot tests described in this paper represent an outgrowth of this discussion and training. In particular, we will discuss three participatory methods for investigating sociolinguistic phenomena in language communities that may be of benefit to practitioners of language documentation. We will also describe selected pilot tests for these methods which were conducted by the authors together with colleagues from SIL, Wycliffe, and other organizations in Malaysia and Indonesia.

## **2. RATIONALE FOR PARTICIPATORY METHODS.**

**2.1 COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AS ESSENTIAL TO LANGUAGE DOCUMENTATION AND CONSERVATION.** Language conservation and revitalization initiatives seek to mitigate or reverse the impact of many powerful sociolinguistic factors which push speakers of minority language communities to shift away from their heritage languages. While linguists are very often concerned about language endangerment issues and value minority languages for their intrinsic worth, many language development and documentation programs, even when done in collaboration with a few members of the target community, do not engage with larger segments of the community, nor garner sufficient resources to address factors underlying the decline of language vitality.

In spite of the fact that members of the language community are the ones most affected by the prospect of language loss and the ones most directly able to effect change in their situation, the community at large might not be aware of the threatened state of their language or the value they might gain should it be documented, developed for written purposes, or revitalized. Additionally, language endangerment is often linked to political disempowerment, lack of socioeconomic opportunity, and marginalization that fosters negative attitudes towards the use of the heritage language. So even if a community realizes that their language is threatened, they may not feel empowered or motivated to participate in its revitalization or conservation. Nonetheless, community buy-in and involvement in language initiatives is not optional if these initiatives are to succeed at bringing about positive changes with regard to language vitality.

**2.2 PARTICIPATORY METHODS FOR SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT.** For sustainable community participation to happen, it is crucial that the people are fully aware of their potential, resources, and capacity to make changes in their community. In recent decades, the increase in use of participatory methods such as PRA<sup>2</sup> by development practitioners has been premised on the goal of seeking the participation of the community in order to include their ideas, resources, and aspirations into programs and activities that are being planned. The distinguishing features of this family of participatory methods are that they “emphasize local knowledge and enable local people to make their own appraisal, analysis, and plans” and “use group animation and exercises to facilitate information shar-

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<sup>2</sup> Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) is sometimes now referred to as Participatory Reflection and Action due to its application in urban as well as rural areas (Kumar 2002).

ing, analysis, and action among stakeholders” (World Bank 1996:183). Development practitioners have found that when the valuable contributions of community members are an integral part of the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of poverty reduction efforts, the community is not only more knowledgeable about what is being planned, but also more willing to take responsibility for their ideas and input and fulfill the commitments being made (Chambers 1994).

Similarly to development programs, effective language programs need the early and substantive involvement of all stakeholders in the design of activities that will affect them. When the people involved feel that their participation is meaningful, the quality, effectiveness, and efficiency of language initiatives will improve. Also, a consensus of development practitioners agree that “those who are affected by development initiatives have a right to participate in them” (Malvicini & Sweetser 2003:1). International law concerning human rights further supports participation of indigenous peoples and ethnic, religious, and linguistic minorities in development and decision making for matters affecting them (United Nations 1993). In the same way, language communities also have the right to participate in and provide input for activities involving the documentation, development, or use of their language as a part of their cultural heritage. Thus, it can be said that there is both pragmatic and ethical justification for implementing participatory approaches in language development, documentation, and conservation.

The term *participatory methods* as used in this paper refers to guided facilitations with a small group of community members brought together to discuss the reality of their language situation. Development organizations have defined the reality of a community as the way in which individual members interpret events, their causes, and their consequences based on collective experience, assumptions, and expectations (Ashford & Patkar 2001). Expressing those perceptions involves dialogue among community members and between outsiders and community members. As a process, dialogue enables the community to analyze their own choices and situation, thereby helping them gain new perspective and create a plan of action to work within their reality and achieve their desired goals. Dialogue cannot happen when parties are isolated or when a pre-set package of conclusions and solutions is created beforehand. For dialogue to happen, all parties must be willing to trust each other’s capacity and knowledge. Participation in formulating the fundamental goals, as well as in planning and carrying out activities, empowers the community and fosters a sense of ownership. This might be a very new exercise for communities accustomed to having their problems analyzed, discussed, and solved by outsiders or a few key leaders. It may also be new for outsiders used to taking a leading role in analyzing problems and planning solutions for communities.

**3. PARTICIPATORY METHODS FOR SOCIOLINGUISTIC INVESTIGATION.** This paper describes three participatory tools,<sup>3</sup> namely Participatory Dialect Mapping, Bilingualism Venn Diagram, and Domains of Language Use Venn Diagram, which were developed to engage communities in research, planning, implementation, and evaluation of language

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<sup>3</sup> These methods are described briefly in an unpublished paper by Hasselbring (2008) outlining their use with the Kamayo language community on the Island of Mindanao in the Philippines.

programs for their own benefit. These methods facilitate investigation of sociolinguistic phenomena to inform and spur planning for effective language initiatives. In a series of guided interactions, members of language communities together build visual representations of collective knowledge about their language and patterns of language use using text, symbols, and pictures. They are then invited to share reactions to the resulting representation and discuss changes they would like to see in their situation.

Table 1 shows pilot tests of these participatory methods which were conducted by the authors, along with other researchers including Jackie Menanti, Johnny Tjia, Rindu Simanjuntak, Matthew Connor, Herly Sitorus, and Brendon Yoder. Sample results and observations from the pilot test are discussed in greater detail below. During the pilot tests, facilitators used Malay or Indonesian to guide the discussion and communicate with participants. Participants sometimes used their heritage language in discussion with one another.

Language	Location	Tools	Participants	Date
Kadazan	Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, Malaysia	Dialect Mapping Bilingualism VD	3	3 Sep 2008
Javanese	South Jakarta, Jakarta, Indonesia	Dialect Mapping Domains VD	5	22 Oct 2008
Javanese	Depok, West Java, Indonesia	Bilingualism VD	4	24 Oct 2008
Betawi (Jakarta Malay)	Depok, West Java, Indonesia	Dialect Mapping Domains VD	10	24 Oct 2008
Aceh	Banda Aceh, Aceh, Indonesia	Dialect Mapping Bilingualism VD	6	7 Nov 2008

TABLE 1. Pilot tests conducted

For the purpose of the pilot tests, groups of individuals from the same language community were gathered through the researchers' social networks and asked to help us practice using the research tools. The individuals' motivation to participate was usually their relationship with a researcher or another friend, and the atmosphere of the discussions was social. We often invited them to share a meal with us before or after the facilitation sessions. In one case, the pilot test group members were participants of a workshop on research methods sponsored by local education officials.

Subsequently, both authors have used the methods described in this paper in fieldwork situations where our respective organizations have an active partnership with a community-based organization, local NGO, or local church denomination interested in language development. In these cases, we suggested the use of participatory methods as part of the assessment of community needs and desires in response to local interest. Individuals who participated in discussion groups in these communities did so because of a relational tie to someone involved, an affiliation with an organization, or a real interest in their language and its future. The number of groups that gather depends on the size of the language community and the scope of the language development activities that are envisioned. Our work to date has generally involved one group per village or district included in the proposed

activities, or two groups where it is more culturally appropriate for women and men to meet separately.

Results reported here represent the consensus choices made by groups of participants as reflected in the final versions of the visualizations they created. Though they appear static, the visualizations represent a process of dialogue. A regular part of the documentation of these activities as we conduct them is making note of points of disagreement and how the group deals with them. The frequency of disagreements arising between participants throughout the course of the activities varies and is influenced by local cultural norms and participants' social ties with one another. In our pilot tests, disagreement was most often understated and indirect, in accordance with cultural values in Indonesia and Malaysia for preserving face and harmony, and thus difficult to observe and interpret as outsiders. The ways in which participants negotiate disagreements can reveal attitudes, motivations, and meanings attached to language. Exploring further the meanings of disagreements which arise, while not done in-depth in this paper, would be a fruitful next step in research for those using these methods in the context of a more established relationship with a language community.

**3.1 PARTICIPATORY DIALECT MAPPING.** The Participatory Dialect Mapping tool is designed to investigate language variation, intelligibility, and attitudes toward varieties of the language. This tool is helpful in that it allows the community to articulate knowledge about their language situation from an emic perspective and creates an opportunity to discuss the scope of a language program. Particularly for non-standardized language varieties, agreement may not yet exist on which varieties should be considered part of the same language<sup>4</sup> or, more practically, which varieties could share the same language program, orthography, literature, and audio materials, and participate in the same language-related organizations or activities.

**3.1.1 PROCEDURES.** To use the Participatory Dialect Mapping tool, a small group of individuals from the same language community is gathered and asked to participate in a discussion about their language. After explaining the project's purpose and the methods that will be used, the facilitator asks participants to name all the language varieties which are similar enough to theirs to be at least somewhat intelligible. Alternately, participants can name groups of people (clans for example) who speak these varieties, or geographic places where the varieties are spoken. Participants write these descriptors on pieces of paper, which are then arranged in the center of the group for all to see. If some of the participants are non-literate, they may choose to draw symbols to represent the language varieties or designate a literate member of the group to write for them. The language variety labels are arranged by the group spatially to represent their real-life geographic locations. The participants are then asked to group language varieties which are the same using loops of twine. Each group of varieties is evaluated by the participants, classified, and marked with

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<sup>4</sup> Languages are often discussed as if they constitute distinct and discrete units. While language varieties in a given setting most often have complex overlapping relationships with one another, the description of languages as units is a useful myth in practical contexts such as organizing for language initiatives.

a visual symbol accordingly. Classifications can vary based on context and local needs. Classifications used in pilot tests are listed in Table 2. Discussion at each step of the process is encouraged, and participants are free to rearrange or reassign classifications as necessary. A digital photograph of the resulting dialect map is taken. The facilitator may then ask for a volunteer to give a summary of the results, which is recorded (either in written or audio format). At this point the group may be prompted to discuss the implications of the results arrived at so far. This facilitation is perhaps best conducted with several groups throughout the language area, as the synthesized results from many groups will give a more accurate picture of perceived language groupings that are relevant when discussing next steps for a language program.

Concept	Questions	Activities
Perceived grouping	Which varieties represented here are the same?	Varieties that are the same are grouped with a colored rope.
Intelligibility	How difficult do you find it to understand a speaker of X variety?	Varieties are marked with symbols to indicate: <i>Understand everything</i> <i>Understand some</i> <i>Understand a little</i> <i>Do not understand at all</i>  And/Or  Varieties are marked with numerical rank by difficulty, with 1 being <i>easiest to understand</i>
Inter-group Language Use	What do you speak when you meet people from X variety?	Varieties are marked with symbols to show that respondents prefer to use: <i>Own variety</i> <i>X variety</i> <i>LWC</i>
Materials Extensibility	In which of these varieties do you think could use the same written/audio materials can be used?	Varieties that can share literature are enclosed with a colored rope.
Preferred Variety	Which variety of Y language is the best?  Which variety of Y language would you prefer for reading a book/listening to a story?	Variety chosen by consensus is marked with a colored token.  Or  Participants vote by placing colored tokens next to their preferred variety's label.

TABLE 2. Classifications and symbols used for Participatory Dialect Mapping

**3.1.2 SAMPLE PILOT TEST RESULTS.** As shown in Figure 1, the Javanese pilot test resulted in a dialect map showing three main groups of varieties, as well as outlying varieties in the far eastern region of Java and Sundanese in West Java that were not grouped with any other varieties. One interesting outcome was that, though all participants chose a variety from Central Java when asked which variety they consider “the best” Javanese, participants agreed during the discussion that they would rather listen to a story in the Malang variety, which grouped with East Java varieties. The participants described the Malang variety as pleasant to listen to and speak, even though the Yogyakarta (Central) variety is more polite. This is in contrast to the conventional opinion that Javanese from Yogyakarta is the central variety which should be used for literature. While broader input and further testing would be recommended, this example shows how discussion among community members can lead to new insights that can inform the successful creation and promotion of heritage language materials for use in the wider language community.

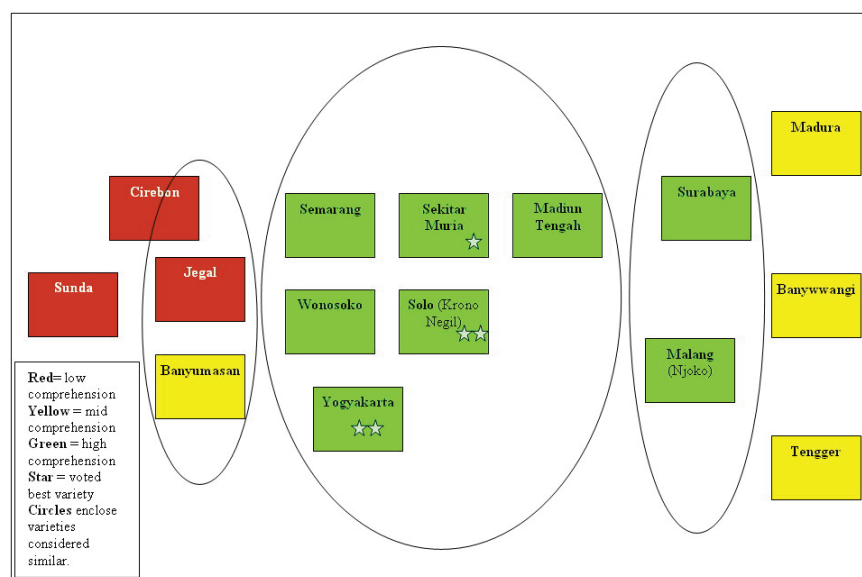


FIGURE 1. Participatory Dialect Map created by Javanese speakers living in Jakarta, Indonesia

One difficulty encountered during the pilot tests was the matter of deciding which varieties are close enough to be included in the map. This occurred multiple times, including during the Javanese pilot test, in which participants decided to include Sundanese and the Sundanese-influenced Cirebon variety of Javanese. In the Aceh pilot tests, participants debated whether Gayo should be included in the map along with Aceh varieties as it is a language of the province of Aceh. Facilitators should feel free to let participants decide which varieties to include in the map, and it should become clear as the facilitation proceeds if the variety in question has a close or distant linguistic relationship (based on intelligibility) with the other varieties. If pressed, the facilitator can return to the original

prompt, emphasizing that the language varieties included should be related closely enough that native speakers of the local language are able to understand at least some of what is said in those varieties.



FIGURE 2. Speakers in Depok, West Java, Indonesia creating a participatory dialect map of Betawi.

**3.1.3 IMPLICATIONS AND APPLICATIONS.** The pilot tests suggest that Participatory Dialect Mapping is an appropriate and useful tool for investigating language variation, as well as for encouraging speakers of minority languages to discuss and decide who, and which language varieties, should be included in the scope of a language program. The facilitation can be used to start a conversation about standardization and use of the local language in education, and audio or written materials for use in the community. The formation of local organizations to promote and preserve the heritage language could be informed by this type of data, which would suggest who can be invited to participate. The selection of “best” and “preferred” varieties, as well as information about intelligibility across varieties, would be helpful for projects to promote heritage language literacy and media production for the widest possible audience.

**3.2 DOMAINS OF LANGUAGE USE VENN DIAGRAM.** The Domains of Language Use Venn Diagram tool (hereafter Domains Venn Diagram) is designed to investigate the choices that a language group makes regarding language use when they interact with others within and outside their community. It also provides indicators of ethnolinguistic vitality and attitudes of the community toward their own language. This tool creates the opportunity for community members to identify the choices they make for language use with different people and in various situations of their daily lives. It reveals an emic perspective on how groups are identified by the community and the situations in which they use language. Particularly for bilingual communities, or communities where there is low vitality in the heritage language, the visualization created at the end of this facilitation helps the community to start thinking more specifically about what is happening with their own language



in relation to more dominant language varieties and provides an opportunity for them to articulate their thoughts and feelings regarding their language situation.

**3.2.1 PROCEDURES.** To construct the Domains Venn Diagram, a small group of individuals from the same language community is gathered and asked to participate in a discussion about their language. After explaining the project's purpose and the methods that will be used, the facilitator asks the participants to think about situations and places during the day when they speak to others, or categories of people with whom they speak. Participants write down their descriptions in large letters on pieces of paper, which are arranged in the center of the group for all to see. If some of the participants are non-literate, they may choose to draw symbols to represent the people, situations, and places they want to describe or designate a literate member of the group to write for them. The facilitator then asks the participants to group together labels which are the same (replacing them with one overarching label) or to create more specific labels where appropriate. For instance, participants might want to break down the category "friends" into more specific groups, such as friends from the same ethnic group, friends from other ethnic groups, older and younger friends, and so on, if such distinctions have an effect on language use.

At this point, the participants are asked to think about the languages they use for each labelled situation, place, or group of people. They are asked to identify the labels that name situations in which they only speak their heritage language and place them in a column marked with the name of the heritage language. Then they identify the labels that name situations in which they speak other languages and place them in the appropriate columns with the names of the other languages (or sets of languages).

The facilitator then asks the participants to rank the situations according to the frequency that community members engage in those communication events. More frequently experienced events or situations are moved toward the top of the column, and less frequent events are moved toward the bottom of the column. The facilitator places row headers labelled for frequency categories such as "daily," "weekly," and "monthly," or "often," "sometimes," and "rarely." For the best visual effect, the facilitator may place dividers to distinguish clear boundaries between the frequency categories. Finally, the facilitator invites the participants to express what they see on the diagram. In order to stimulate discussion, the facilitator may ask the group to talk about what the diagram tells them about their language use, what their feelings are towards it, and if there is any desire for change. The facilitator may then ask for a volunteer to give a summary of the results, which is recorded (in either written or audio format). A digital photograph of the resulting domains diagram is taken. The facilitation may be repeated with several sets of participants in order to get input from many different demographic groups (e.g., age, gender, geographic location). The synthesized results from groups with different combinations of social factors may improve the accuracy of the picture of use and vitality of that language.

**3.2.2 SAMPLE PILOT TEST RESULTS.** For the Betawi group, the Domains Venn Diagram indicated high language vitality for the vernacular language, with Betawi preferred in the majority of day-to-day language situations. The group reported that Betawi and Indonesian together are also used in some daily situations, including religious contexts. Indonesian alone, to the exclusion of Betawi, is reportedly used infrequently, and only in formal con-

texts or places in which speaking with non-Betawi individuals is likely. The visual representation of this data as shown in Table 3 demonstrates how the group's perception of their language use situation is displayed clearly in the diagram for the group members to see and discuss.

Frequency	Betawi		Both	Indonesian
Daily	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Speaking with family</li> <li>• With friends</li> <li>• Coffee shop</li> <li>• With close friends</li> <li>• Badminton court</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• With parents</li> <li>• By the railroad tracks</li> <li>• At the motorcycle taxi stand</li> <li>• On the street</li> <li>• At bus terminal</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prayer time at the mosque</li> <li>• Religious meetings</li> <li>• Traveling by vehicle</li> <li>• At the gas station</li> <li>• At sports center</li> </ul>	
Weekly	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Barber</li> <li>• Market</li> <li>• Social gathering for neighbors</li> <li>• Fish market</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Brother's house</li> <li>• Mechanic shop</li> <li>• With old friends</li> </ul>		
Seldom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Family gathering</li> <li>• While fishing</li> </ul>			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In office</li> <li>• Meeting with school teacher</li> <li>• Neighborhood meeting</li> <li>• Recreation place</li> <li>• Hospital</li> <li>• Birthday party</li> </ul>

TABLE 3. Domains Venn Diagram for Betawi

In the Javanese pilot test conducted in Jakarta, the participants had some disagreement about where to place labels for interactions with family members. This arose because one of the participants did not use Javanese exclusively with his family members. The participants resolved this by choosing to place multiple labels for each differing language use pattern. For example, communicating with in-laws was included under the Javanese column, and again in the Indonesian column to represent that at least one participant used Indonesian to speak to his in-laws. At the end of the discussion, the participant who used Indonesian and not Javanese with his children expressed concern that his children would not be able to speak Javanese in the future, and told the other participants that he sees a need for the Javanese language to be maintained for future generations.



FIGURE 3. A Domains Venn Diagram facilitation conducted by another group of researchers with Dusun and Kadazan speakers in Sabah, Malaysia.

**3.2.3 IMPLICATIONS AND APPLICATIONS.** The pilot tests suggest that the Domains Venn Diagram can be used to investigate the languages spoken within a community, attitudes of the community toward the heritage language, and the vitality of the heritage language. The tool provides a means for various individuals to discuss their perceptions of language use in their community together and results in a visual representation of the group's assessment, and can thus help the language community form a clearer picture of their language use and raise awareness of language vitality issues if heritage language use is in decline. The discussion following the diagram's creation encourages members of the community to think about their heritage language and helps them to consider whether they want to make any change in the language situation that is laid out through the diagram. This facilitation can be particularly helpful in starting a conversation with the community about strategies for promoting revitalization and maintenance of the heritage language. In those cases, the discussion could then be directed towards selecting the domains which community members would like to target for language documentation or conservation.

**3.3 BILINGUALISM VENN DIAGRAM.** The Bilingualism Venn Diagram participatory tool is designed to investigate the bilingualism patterns of demographic groups within a language community as perceived by community members. It creates a visual representation of the bilingualism patterns of the language community described by the participants. It also provides indicators of the vitality of the heritage language and the language attitudes of the community.

**3.3.1 PROCEDURES.** To construct the Bilingualism Venn Diagram, a small group of individuals from the same language community is gathered and asked to participate in a discussion about their language. After explaining the purpose of the project and the methods to

be used, the facilitator asks the group to name the languages spoken in their community, including the heritage language and the most prevalently used language of wider communication (LWC). The group is asked to name descriptors for groups of people that speak the heritage language well. They are then asked to name descriptors for groups of people that speak the LWC well. Examples of descriptors include age group, geographic location, urban/rural, level of education, kinship, gender, occupation, location by political unit, and religious affiliation. The participants are encouraged to create descriptors that are meaningful and appropriate in their context, and the facilitator should draw out participants' ideas and help them brainstorm a large number of descriptors. Each descriptor is written or represented with a picture on a slip of paper that is placed in the center of the group for all to see.



FIGURE 4. Javanese speakers in Depok, West Java creating a Bilingualism Venn Diagram.

At this point the facilitator forms two overlapping circles made of colored twine in the center area, explaining that one circle will represent those who speak the heritage language well, and the other will represent those who speak the LWC well. The overlapping area represents those who speak both languages well. The group places the descriptor labels in the appropriate places in the circles. Participants are given an opportunity to create additional descriptor labels for groups that may have been previously overlooked. The facilitator then asks the participants which circle represents the most people in the community and which categories are increasing or decreasing. The resulting diagram is summarized and the summary is either written down or audio recorded. A digital picture of the diagram is also taken. The group is then asked to reflect on the diagram and make comments about the situation they have diagrammed, as well as any changes they would like to see in their situation.

**3.3.2 SAMPLE PILOT TEST RESULTS.** In the Kadazan pilot test, the Bilingualism Venn Diagram exercise indicated that increasingly, the number of people who are monolingual in Kadazan is decreasing, and the number of people competent in only the LWCs (Malay and/or English) is increasing. For this group, it was an opportunity to think about the implications of this language shift on their community, and the desire to increase language competency in the heritage language was expressed.

As shown in Figure 5, three language circles were used in the Aceh pilot test instead of two: one to represent Aceh, one to represent Indonesian, and one to represent other local languages (Gayo, Batak, and other minority languages in Aceh). This worked well, though the resulting diagram was more complicated. Facilitators can help participants decide together the number of circles to include in the diagram so that the resulting picture will be clear, meaningful, and acceptable. Reflecting on the diagram at the end of the process, several participants expressed pride in the fact that the majority of people in Aceh Province speak both Aceh and Indonesian. Some participants expressed a desire for everyone in Aceh to be bilingual in both Aceh and Indonesian, which would entail expanding competency in Indonesian to people living in remote areas, and teaching Aceh to those ethnic Aceh city dwellers who only speak Indonesian, as well as to people of other ethnic backgrounds.

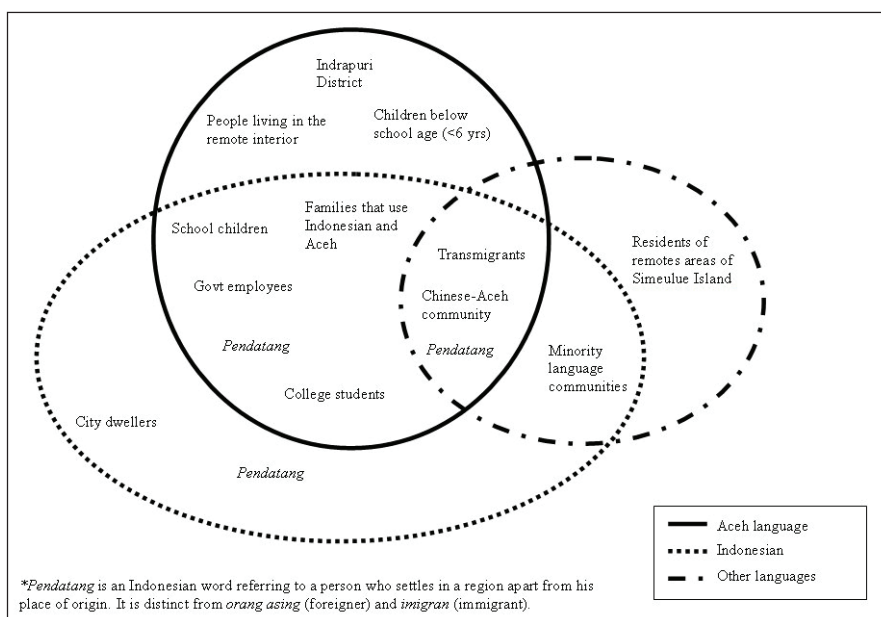


FIGURE 5. Bilingualism Venn Diagram for Aceh Province created by Aceh and Gayo speakers in Banda Aceh.

**3.3.3 IMPLICATIONS AND APPLICATIONS.** The pilot tests suggest that the Bilingualism Venn Diagram tool can be used with positive results for investigating patterns of bilingualism and ethnolinguistic vitality as perceived by members of a language community. The

resulting diagram is a visual representation of the group's assessment of bilingualism in the community by demographic group, allowing participants to consider and discuss their language situation as they see it. In situations where the heritage language is threatened, the Bilingualism Venn Diagram can be used to increase awareness of the need to conserve the heritage language. It can also be used to inform project planning and strategy, with a focus on outreach to demographic groups within the community for inclusion in language initiatives. Low ethnolinguistic vitality in the heritage language, particularly in urban areas, is sometimes accompanied by social fragmentation of the community (Landweer 2000, United Nations 2008) and the loss of social institutions that facilitate dialogue and group identity formation. In these cases, gathering individuals together for participatory methods facilitation groups is a first step toward creating a forum to discuss language issues where community members can share knowledge and build a shared understanding of their language situation and desires for the future.

**4. CONCLUSIONS.** Participatory methods for sociolinguistic research as described in this paper can be useful to practitioners of language documentation and conservation for 1) identifying which variety of the language would have the broadest extensibility for use in materials (audio recordings, video, books, literacy efforts), 2) assessment of language vitality and underlying factors, and 3) identifying domains community members want to target first for documentation or conservation.

Since the pilot tests, these methods have been used in various language communities with some positive results, including the production of written and video materials in the heritage language (sometimes with translation into the LWC). However, it is still too early to tell what the final outcomes will be with regard to language development and maintenance in these communities. These cases illustrate that, ideally, the dialogue started with community members about language issues does not end with the participatory facilitations, but leads into further planning and activities to promote the participants' expressed goals for the future of their language community.

Benefits of using participatory methods for language development, documentation and conservation include the following:

- Effectiveness of activities increases, because there is a greater match between the community's needs, priorities, and values and relevant efforts to address them.
- The community will be able to identify and use the broadest range of resources that is available within the community itself, such as local knowledge and skills. Marginalized groups such as non-literates, women, minorities, and the poor are included in language program planning.
- The community is empowered to develop further language programs independently, without the initiative of outsiders.
- As the community feels responsible and committed to programs, there is a better chance for their sustainability.

Potential drawbacks to the use of participatory methods for language programs are as follows:

- Some stakeholders might feel uncomfortable or threatened by the idea of community participation and decision-making.
- Facilitation sessions may be dominated by the traditional elite of the community, who by virtue of their status and position are deferred to by other participants.
- The results of participatory research are generally qualitative and emic, which might not be satisfactory for some stakeholders, such as government agencies, who are used to quantitative data.
- Those expecting quick results may be disappointed by the large amount of time required for participatory methods, especially for community preparation and follow-up.
- The community may have unrealistically high expectations for projects, which might still lack sufficient support and resources especially in early stages.

Despite these drawbacks, the risks of using participatory methods are outweighed by the potential benefits to language programs and the language community. Participatory methods can be used in conjunction with other more traditional linguistic research methods, as long as the value for community knowledge, input, and ownership is maintained. When used together, participatory methods can enhance community involvement and support for other types of linguistic research and strengthen trust between outside researchers and the community. The most valuable impact of using participatory methods is that the process itself builds community awareness and engagement with language issues, which are essential elements for success of language conservation and development efforts. The process of thinking critically about their own language situation is a step from passivity toward engagement that creates an opportunity for the community to participate in, shape, and own collaborative documentation and conservation initiatives for their language.

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