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## Breaking the Secrets behind the Polyglots: How Do They Acquire Many Languages?

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## Breaking the Secrets behind the Polyglots: How Do They Acquire Many Languages?

### Abstract

In this study, participants acquired three types of language, those are regional, national and foreign ones. The purpose of this research was to explore how Indonesian polyglots acquire several different languages. We collected data through demographic questionnaires and semi-structured interviews obtained from nine participants. Four salient themes and sub-themes that emerged in this research were (a) mastering languages through instructed learning (learning in formal educational institution and learning in informal educational institution), (b) gaining extra amounts of languages input beyond the classroom (getting more access to a national language environment and getting more access to foreign languages environment), (c) learning languages autonomously (self-directed learning through printed resources and self-directed learning through media and technology), and (d) acculturating with a new language group in society. The findings indicated that the polyglots acquired several different languages through a natural process, a learning process, and a mixture of both naturalistic as well as instructed experiences.

### Keywords

Polyglots, Languages, Acquisition, Learning, Phenomenological Study

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## **Breaking the Secrets behind the Polyglots: How Do They Acquire Many Languages?**

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*In this study, participants acquired three types of language, those are regional, national and foreign ones. The purpose of this research was to explore how Indonesian polyglots acquire several different languages. We collected data through demographic questionnaires and semi-structured interviews obtained from nine participants. Four salient themes and sub-themes that emerged in this research were (a) mastering languages through instructed learning (learning in formal educational institution and learning in informal educational institution), (b) gaining extra amounts of languages input beyond the classroom (getting more access to a national language environment and getting more access to foreign languages environment), (c) learning languages autonomously (self-directed learning through printed resources and self-directed learning through media and technology), and (d) acculturating with a new language group in society. The findings indicated that the polyglots acquired several different languages through a natural process, a learning process, and a mixture of both naturalistic as well as instructed experiences. Keywords: Polyglots, Languages, Acquisition, Learning, Phenomenological Study*

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Inevitably, language is a definite medium whenever an interaction is requisite. At least, people acquire one language naturally as their mother tongue; in certain cases, however, they get more than one language as their first language (Maneva, 2004; Moore, 2010). To widen their communication scope, they have to learn a second language. It refers to any language other than their first language, which is learned consciously, and includes any other language of wider communication, such as from regional, national, as well as truly foreign ones (DeAngelis, 2007; Mitchell & Myles, 2004).

People living in a multilingual country, like Indonesia, have a good chance of becoming polyglots, since hundreds of regional language are spoken all over this country (Cohn & Ravindranath, 2014; Marcellino, 2008). Moreover, to bridge their communication nationally, Indonesian (also known as the Malay language) is a medium to unite among the different vernaculars (Dardjowidjojo, 1998; Goebel, 2002). Furthermore, since any natural foreign languages in Indonesia is less than likely, an instruction process is commonly employed. As a result, foreign languages are a core component in the education curriculum of Indonesia (Nababan, 1991). English, in particular, is taught from secondary school through higher education. In fact, it is often taught beginning in primary school, but this depends on teacher availability. Additionally, in the schools affiliated with the Ministry of Religious Affairs, both English and Arabic are the compulsory subjects (Habibi et al., 2018; Tahir, 2015). Meanwhile, other foreign languages such as Japanese, French, Chinese, and others, may appear as electives, at either high schools or universities. Although foreign languages have been taught, the duration of the teaching-learning process is restricted. It is one of the major problems in foreign language education in Indonesia, aside from their lack of exposure

(Noprival, 2016). In other words, those who want to succeed in increasing their multilingual ability cannot depend on a formal institutional study, but more on informal learning.

Even though the people have an opportunity to access three types of tongues, which are regional, national and foreign ones, in fact, most of Indonesian are bilingual. They speak a local language as their mother tongue and Indonesian language as an official language (Aziz, 2003; Zakaria, 2016). The rationale for this study is to motivate people living in a multilingual country to acquire or learn many languages since they have greater possibilities to become polyglots. It is not only for individuals in Indonesia but also worldwide, especially to those who are in the countries where many languages are spoken. Meanwhile, the intended audiences for this study are language learners, language researchers, and societies as these individuals would benefit from the finding of this study by understanding how Indonesian polyglots acquire many languages. Actually, being able to use many languages is very important. According to Gu (2011), it is the way to interact more intimately with someone involving in a conversation. Moreover, mastering many languages will be useful for personal, academic, and professional purposes (Marten & Mostert, 2012).

The study on multiple language acquisition and learning has become the focus of several previous researchers. For example, studies on multilingual communities (Conteh & Riasat, 2014; Hopf, Mcleod, & Mcdonagh, 2016; Tahir, 2015), multilingual e-learning (Clark & Gruba, 2010; Harrison & Thomas, 2009), and motivation to learn multiple languages (Marten & Mostert, 2012). However, the studies specifically explore how polyglots acquire several different languages are still limited (Alkire, 2005; Chevalier, 2012; Hoffmann, 1985; Krashen & Kiss, 1996; Maneva, 2004; Moore, 2010; Tsimpli & Smith, 1991). To the best of our knowledge, there is no research investigating the polyglots acquiring three types of language, those are regional, national and foreign ones through a natural process and an instructed learning in Indonesia, a multilingual country. This study is an attempt to fill a gap in the multiple language acquisition literature in Indonesian context. The purpose of the study was to explore how Indonesian polyglots acquire several different languages.

### **The Context of the Researchers**

The first author for this study, Noprival, is a graduate student who is pursuing a doctoral degree in the Department of Language Education at Universitas Negeri Jakarta (State University of Jakarta), Indonesia. He received a full scholarship from Lembaga Pengelola Dana Pendidikan (Indonesia Endowment Fund for Education), Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Indonesia. His doctoral research interest is in the area of multiple language acquisition. This academic paper reports the findings from his dissertation. The second and third authors are the supervisory team of his doctoral dissertation. The second author, Zainal Rafli, is a professor in the Department of Language Education at Universitas Negeri Jakarta (State University of Jakarta), Jakarta, Indonesia. His main areas of interest are second language acquisition (SLA), psycholinguistics and multilingualism. He has published numerous articles both nationally and internationally. The third author, Nuruddin, is an associate professor working in the same department and university as the second author. He focuses on qualitative research in language education.

### **Methodology of Research**

#### **Research Design**

In this study, we employed a qualitative approach. It refers to an inquiry process seeking an in-depth understanding of social phenomena within their natural setting (Creswell,

2007; Gay, Mills, & Airasian, 2012; Nunan, 2010). As this study focused on the understanding of the lived experiences of Indonesian polyglots in acquiring many languages, a phenomenological tradition seemed to be more appropriate for addressing the aim of this study. The essentials of a phenomenological study are to understand how one or more individuals experience a phenomenon and to explore in-depth accounts of experiences and their meanings from participants' personal words, descriptions, reflections, on the phenomenon (Moustakas, 1994).

### **Sampling Procedures and Participants**

Initially, we tried to recruit participants for this study from one language learning community in Jakarta, Java Island, Indonesia. For sampling procedures, we used purposeful sampling with a convenient case strategy. Creswell (2007) stated, "convenience cases, which represent sites or individuals from which researcher can access and easily collect data" (p. 126). To get access to this community, we joined as a member of the social media to observe their activities on social media. Then, we applied to take part in the biweekly face-to-face meeting as a language community participant. After several meetings, we formally asked permission to the community board for doing research. To identify whether they were polyglot or not, we administered questionnaires to members of this community. Moreover, to ensure their ability in mastering languages we asked them to show their language proficiency certificate, especially for foreign languages. Meanwhile, the national and regional ones, we got the participants' information background on language mastery from demographic questionnaires only. Unfortunately, we got a few polyglots allowed to be participants. Since our data did not get a saturation point, we also tried to find outside this community. We also used a snowball sampling. Snowball sampling is a good sampling for conducting research where studying hard to reach populations (Russel, 2002). Another rational reason using snowball sampling was that there was no information to those who mastered many languages neither from government institutions nor from non-governmental institutions in Indonesia. So, we got the polyglots by considering the recommendation from the participants to get the other participants.

We have organized a brief description of each participant revealed from demographic questionnaires. All of the participants acquired three types of language, those are a local language, a national language, and a foreign language. First, Arto is speaking Indonesian as his mother tongue. Meanwhile, his second languages are Javanese, Balinese, Italian, and English. Second, Awi has learned Indonesian, Arabic, and English at either school or university. She also speaks Javanese as her first language. Third, Bufer can use four different languages. Those languages are Indonesian (mother tongue), Torajanese, Balinese, and English. Fourth, Daidil is speaking Sasaknese since he was born and raised in Lombok. His second languages are Indonesian, Balinese, English, and Italian. Fifth, Egus is a polyglot who is to speak Javanese, Indonesian, Tobelonese, Ternatenese, and English. Sixth, Furnus can speak three foreign languages (French, Russian, and English). For daily communication, he speaks Indonesian and Musinese. Seventh, Goni is the youngest polyglot in this study speaking four different languages, in particular, Kerincinese, Minangnese Indonesian, and English. Eighth, Hidan is speaking Maduranese as his first language. He masters Indonesian, Javanese, and Arabic. Last, Iman can use five different languages, which are Indonesian, Javanese, English, Arabic, and French.

We convinced our participants that their participation was totally voluntary, and their statement would be treated confidentially. Although an Institutional Review Board (IRB) is not common in Indonesia; however, in order to ensure that we were in line with research

ethics, we concealed the names of people, places, and research sites through the use of pseudonyms to protect the right and the privacy of participants.

### **Data Collection, Data Analysis, and Trustworthiness**

We collected data through semi-structured interviews conducted individually at a location of participants' choice around five months (December 2017 to April 2018). In the actual interview, all our participants were really helpful and cooperative in giving information. Even, each of them was interviewed more than once to gain more data and clarify previous data what they have given. We also spent much time with participants to get in-depth information related to our research, as Creswell (2007, p. 201) stated "qualitative researchers strive for understanding, that deep structure of knowledge that comes from visiting personally with participants, spending extensive time in the field, and probing to obtain detailed meanings."

For the data analysis of this phenomenological study, we used Moustakas' (1994) steps. Initially, we address the issue of bracketing by attempting to set out entire preconceived notions aside to best understand how polyglots acquire many languages. The next step that we did in analyzing our phenomenological data was to do Horizontalization. The process of horizontalization was reading and rereading the transcribed interviews. We coded the interviews by focusing on significant statements. Then, we organized, grouped, or clustered the significant statements into themes. In addition, we started identifying an individual textural description for each of the participants including specific quotes from the participants to more fully describe the phenomenon. Following the textural description, we moved a structural description of an experience. It focused on how the phenomenon was experienced.

In a quantitative study, a researcher used the term "validity and reliability" to assess the accuracy of an instrument. On the other hand, in our research, qualitative design, to verify the accuracy of data, finding, and interpretation, we used "trustworthiness" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). We returned the transcription of interviews to the participants to check what we have recorded and transcribed were matched with their standpoints (Koelsch, 2013). Also, our research conducted prolonged engagement and repeated interview (Creswell, 2007). In this research, all participants were interviewed more than once to get in-depth information.

### **Findings**

This phenomenological study was aimed at exploring how Indonesian polyglots acquire many languages. Based on data analysis, we found overarching themes and sub-themes including (a) mastering languages through instructed learning (learning in formal educational institution and learning in informal educational institution), (b) gaining extra amounts of languages input beyond the classroom (getting more access to a national language environment and getting more access to foreign languages environment), (c) learning languages autonomously (self-directed learning through printed resources and self-directed learning through media and technology), and (d) acculturating with a new language group in society.

#### **Mastering Languages through Instructed Learning**

All participants in this study shared with us that they learned languages in educational institutions, and even some of them experienced foreign languages as a medium of instruction at either schools or universities. Regarding mastering languages through instructed learning,

we found two interrelated sub-themes including learning in formal educational institutions and learning in informal educational institution.

In formal educational institutions, both Indonesian and foreign languages are part of the education curriculum. For Indonesian language, an official language of Indonesia, is taught as a subject since the early level of education. It is also a medium of instruction at school. In this research, all participants confirmed that they learned their Indonesian language since primary school. For example, "I have started learning Bahasa [Indonesian language] since I was in primary school as a subject. Also, the medium of instruction used for all subject was Indonesian language," Goni reported. Similarly, Daidil stated "Since we did not understand Indonesian language, teachers taught us through our own language [a regional language]...In the fourth grade [an elementary school], Indonesian is a medium of instruction and a subject." On the other hand, foreign languages, are a mandatory course in any school in Indonesia as well. English, for instance, is taught from junior high school through senior high school. Bufer, for example, stated, "When I was in elementary school, I did not have an English subject. I started learning it in Junior high school." In fact, English is also often as part of a subject in primary school, but it depends on school policy. For example, Awi said, "I have learned English since I was in the fourth grade of elementary school..." Aside from English, the schools affiliated with the ministry of religion, Arabic is the compulsory subjects based on the national curriculum. For example, "I started learning Arabic in Madrasah Ibtidayyah [an Islamic elementary school]. Then, I got more exposure to Arabic when I was in Pesantren [Islamic Boarding School]," Hidan reported. The statements clearly indicated that all participants learned both a national language and foreign languages in formal educational institutions. Particularly, all of them learned Indonesian as a subject at the beginning of elementary school. Also, the language was a medium of instruction for all subjects, except in the first three grade in areas where students did not know Indonesian enough. Meanwhile, the participants started learning English from junior high school. Yet, some of them were taught in elementary school. Moreover, the participants studied in schools under the Ministry of Religious Affairs, English and Arabic were compulsory subjects.

In addition, instructed language learning is not only conducted by formal educational institutions, but also the informal ones. Actually, taking a foreign language course may be an alternative to learning foreign languages. For example, Furnus reported, "I had a dream to be a diplomat having the ability to speak more than one foreign language.... meanwhile, a foreign language taught at school was only English. That was the reason I took French course for three years." Similarly, Egus stated, "I took an English course when I was a senior high school. I think the course was much more convenient than learning English at school. It makes the learning process simple; I got a lot of fun." It is interesting to note that the interview data above indicated that the participants learned the foreign language certain foreign language, for example French, since it was not taught at school. Moreover, another reason why they learned foreign languages outside the school was because the formal institution did not satisfy them in term language subjects at school. Instead, the informal language education gives them many benefits like fun learning.

### **Gaining Extra amounts of Languages Input beyond the Classroom**

Success in increasing language ability cannot depend only on instructed learning but also gaining more extra amounts of language input beyond the classroom. In this study, the participants confirmed that they got a lot of exposure to languages outside the classroom. In relation to this theme, two sub-themes emerged were more access to national language (Indonesian language) environment and more access to foreign language environment.

In Indonesia, the opportunity to access Indonesian language is much more than foreign languages. The language is not only as a subject but also as a medium of instruction at school. For example, “Apart from Indonesian is as a subject and medium of instruction at school, I got a lot of [input] the national language [Indonesian] outside the classroom like reading newspaper, watching television, getting public service, attending a seminar,” Goni reported. Likewise, Arto Reflected, “.Indonesian language is everywhere..... at home [his mother tongue], at school, at the office.....it makes my language [Indonesian] better.” Moreover, Bufer stated, “My first language is Indonesian...it is used as my daily communication.” Our interview data showed that the participants got a lot of exposure Indonesian language both inside and outside their schools. Even some of the participants in this study admitted that their mother tongue is Indonesian.

On the other hand, getting more access to foreign languages environment is a benefit for increasing the language ability. Furnus, for instance, reported, “I got a scholarship to study in Russia ... I must speak Russian with my roommate, neighbour, university staff since English is not commonly used in Russia.” Similarly, Iman stated, “I had been in India for 5 years. I got a lot of exposure to English as my daily communication with Indians and other foreigners. Since many people in India speak English. It could reinforce my English what I have learned in Indonesia.” In this study, some of the participants had been living in abroad, especially for study purposes. Since they mingled with the native speaker or people speaking a particular foreign language as their daily communication really, it helped a lot in improving and reinforcing their foreign language skills.

### **Learning Languages Autonomously**

A self-instruction in language learning refers to situations in which learners are learning a language without the direct control of the teacher (Dickinson, 1987). Certainly, it should be supported by the availability of language learning resources. Basically, an autonomous learner needs extra learning materials that might substitute a teacher. In relation to this theme, we found sub-themes including self-directed learning through printed resources and self-directed learning through media and technology.

Regardless of the technology development nowadays, printed material has been used up until now as a language learning resource. Our participants stated that using of printed resources was fruitful media to support autonomous language learning. For example, Daidil confirmed, “... I encourage myself to learn Italian. I have an Italian book and dictionary [printed materials] ... Mostly I teach myself ...I spend much time to make my own grammar formula... The dictionary is like my girlfriend. I bring it anywhere in my pocket...To practice my Italian, I come to approach Italian tourists.” Then, Arto stated, “I was really interested in learning Italian. I used printed resources, like a phase book. I think it made me easy to learn Italian. Also, the dictionary helps me to learn the language.” The excerpts revealed that printed resources, especially books and dictionaries, really supported the participants in learning languages independently.

Additionally, the global development towards the 21st century which is characterized by the advancement in science and technology with all their impact on every aspect of life has made us aware of the importance of educational technology to bridge knowledge transfer. Moreover, the current learning trend is learner-centred in which to some extent technology can substitute a teacher. In this study, the participant confirmed that the emergence of technological tools has given great freedom to access knowledge, including language learning. For instance, Furnus reported, “...to enhance my Russian ability, I used VK. It is a social media that is originally from Rusia...it also could be employed as language learning [Russian].” Likewise, Awi added, “I like to add a friend on facebook with a foreigner. So I



can chat with them using English.” Similarly, Iman stated “ Currently, I can easily access any source of language I want to learn. In learning French, aside from learning conventionally using a book, novel, and dictionary I also learn through YouTube, WhatsApp group of French community, community language chatting in the internet, online material, and social media.” The data indicated that the media and technology were used to reinforce language learning what the participants have learned in their educational institution. Even the participants could learn a new language without instructed learning instead of empowering online language learning autonomously.

### **Acculturating with a New Language Group in Society**

Language acculturation means the integration of two or more groups speaking their language differently in a particular society (Schumann, 1986). People can acquire a second language through migrating to new language society which has a different language with their mother tongue. People have to adjust with culture in a new place including language. Shifting from one region to another then living in a certainly longer period of time had a good chance of acquiring a new language. Hidan, for example, stated, “I shifted to Malang for continuing my study in bachelor degree ... The native language of Malang is Javanese which is different from my mother tongue [Maduranese]. After mingling with the people there more than one year I get used to speaking Javanese.” Moreover, Bufer reflected, “...so I and all my family shifted to Baubau [Island Sulawesi, Indonesia]. In the village where I lived there, the majority of people were transmigrant from Bali. Since my neighbour, my schoolmate, and all the people there used Balinese, I acquired Balinese very well.” Another participant, Iman, reported, “Before living in Jogjakarta, I can speak Javanese but a little. But after Living in Jogjakarta for more than one year, my Javanese significantly improved.” These data obviously showed that the participants acquired naturally a new local language by immersing in the communities. Also, this finding revealed that acculturation could strengthen language competence what they have known before.

### **Discussion**

The aim of this study was to explore how Indonesian polyglots acquire many languages. The following research question guided this study: how do Indonesian polyglots acquire many languages? We found four salient themes and sub-themes that emerged in this research were (a) mastering languages through instructed learning (learning in formal educational institution and learning in informal educational institution), (b) gaining extra amounts of languages input beyond the classroom (getting more access to a national language environment and getting more access to foreign languages environment), (c) learning languages autonomously (self-directed learning through printed resources and self-directed learning through media and technology), and (d) acculturating with a new language group in society.

One of the processes in acquiring the second language is through instructed language learning (Ellis, 1994, 2005; Mitchell & Myles, 2004; Ortega, 2013). In Indonesia, either Indonesian or foreign languages are accommodated in the national curriculum taught in formal education. In all schools in Indonesia, Indonesian is a subject and medium of instruction for all subjects as well from the basic level of education through higher education (Nababan, 1991). Unlike Indonesian, foreign languages are taught only as a subject at school. English, for instance, is initially instructed formally from junior high school (Mukminin et al., 2015; Noprival, 2016). Also, some primary school are taught English beginning in elementary school despite the fact that language is still debatable (Arif, 2015). In relation to

our participants, they had a different starting point in learning English. Some of them have learned English since they were in elementary school and some others were English in junior high school. Meanwhile, the schools affiliated with the Ministry of Religious Affairs, both English and Arabic is a core subject (Habibi et al., 2018; Tahir, 2015). On the other hand, learning foreign languages, especially English, in informal institutions is an alternative to reinforce the language that has been taught at school. As the public education sector contributes little towards young Indonesians' English language skills (Lamb, 2002). The previous studies (Abadi, 2015; Kubota, 2011; Lamb, 2004; Nurhayati, Hendrawaty, & Angkarini, 2013) confirmed that learning informal educational institutions are effective to facilitate in learning language, including foreign language learning.

Another way which influenced participants' language acquisition was by gaining extra amounts of language input beyond the classroom. The quality of language environment is one of factor succeeding in language learning (Dulay, Burt, & Krashen, 1982). In other words, the more exposure a language learner receive, the more and the faster they will learn a language (Ellis, 2005). Undoubtedly, as the participants are Indonesian nationals living in Indonesia, the opportunity to access Indonesian language is more frequently in daily communication (Dardjowidjojo, 1998; Goebel, 2002). The language is not only as used at schools but also outside formal educational institutions. Moreover, as the official language, it was frequently used in many sectors like in civil service, a mass media, a seminar, a preach, and so forth. Since Indonesia is a multilingual country, Indonesian used for inter-group communication as well (Dardjowidjojo, 1998; Nababan, 1991; Paauw, 2009). In different circumstances, for instance, foreign languages are not so easy as Indonesian to get access to the environment. In this study, those participants studying abroad got the benefit of foreign language acquisition. Some studies have shown that students studying abroad will strengthen much their foreign language proficiency (Kinginger, 2011; Segalowitz & Freed, 2004). Despite the fact that studying abroad is not always very significant on foreign language improvement, as Tanaka (2007) found in his research on Japanese's students studying in New Zealand.

The next finding revealed from the interviews related to how Indonesian polyglots acquire many languages was learning languages autonomously. The independent language learners mean those who develop learning autonomously by focusing on the need of individual learners and choosing their own way to reach the learning target (White, 2008). Moreover, in autonomous learning, language learners tend to have their different own convenient way to learn a language (Skehan, 1991). Actually, there are a growing number of examples of successful autonomous language learning (Bown, 2009; Lamb, 2007). This study revealed that printed resources are still leading to learning languages independently like book, dictionary, novel, and so forth. This results of this study were relevant with the previous study. For instance, Krashen and Kiss (1996) explored how Lomb, a Hungarian polyglot, master 17 languages. Interestingly, most of her languages ability was learned autonomously through reading the novel, using the dictionary, and learning grammar inductively. Also, self-directed learning through media and technology could give a positive impact on language learning. For instance, the use of social media in independent language learning (Kabilan, Ahmad, & Abidin, 2010; Lin, Warschauer, Blake, & Lin, 2016; Yunus & Salehi, 2012). Also, another application tool confirmed that they help language learner learning independently without direct teacher control, like employing *Livemocha* (Clark & Gruba, 2010; Harrison & Thomas, 2009), and *SpeakApps* (Nic Giolla Mhichíl, Appel, Ó Ciardubháin, Jager, & Prizel-Kania, 2015).

The last result about the process of how Indonesian polyglots acquire many languages was acculturating with a new language group in society. The participants in this study also acquired second languages through migrating to a certain place which has a different

language with their mother tongue. It happens owing to speaking language with friends, neighbours, colleagues, and by listening to a radio, watching television or reading a newspaper (Tubergen & Wierenga, 2011). This finding was consistent with some previous studies (Moore, 2010; Tubergen & Wierenga, 2011) indicating that people experiencing acculturation through migrating to a new place for years could acquire a second language. It was relevant to intergroup model as well, which explain conditions that lead minority group members in a multilingual setting to learn and use the dominant language of the majority group (Giles & Byrne, 1982). On the other hand, if the migrant group is politically, culturally, and economically superior, it might influence a host community to speak their language. As history proved when India was ruled by an English-speaking country, British Empire. Until now English is one of an official language in India. In other words, the migrant in form of colonialization influence language policy (Azam, Chin, & Prakash, 2013).

Furthermore, the findings of this study also showed how each type of language acquired by the participants. Firstly, local languages, like Minangnese, Javanese, Maduranese, Balinese, Sasaknese, Torajanese, Ternatenese and Tobelonese, were acquired naturally without formal instruction. Then, the national language, Indonesian, was mostly gained through a process of learning at educational institutions. It is as a medium of instruction as well as a core subject. Simultaneously, they could get more this language input beyond the classroom since Indonesian is as an official language of Indonesia as well. Meanwhile, foreign languages were acquired through a process of learning, either self-taught or through instructed learning. Also, the participants gained extra amounts of input of a foreign language beyond the classroom, especially those who had ever stayed abroad for a longer period of time.

However, we are aware that these findings have limitations and are open to criticism. One limitation of our research was scant extant research exists of polyglots. Second limitation was there might be some different results, once research is conducted in a different setting. In other words, our findings may not be representative of polyglots across the country. Regardless of its limitations, the finding in this study contributes to our understanding of how Indonesian polyglots acquire several different languages. Future researchers may explore how hyperpolyglots, for example those who master ten languages or more, acquire languages. Also, future quantitative research may include a larger sample of polyglots from different contexts.

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