

# The Ethnic Minority Speech Codes on Education

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**Abstract.** This study focuses on examining educational processes in Sikep community (a minority ethnic group in Indonesia). Education is an influential aspect in forming social harmony in the minority groups. However, formal education cannot be applied properly in particular group of ethnic minorities due to local specific perspectives on education. Therefore, it is important to comprehend local values that are related to education in order to established social harmony in the minority ethnic group. The purpose of this study is to describe the Sikep community's construction of meaning on local and formal education discourses. The main theories in this research are the Speech Codes Theory and Ethnography Communication Theory. An ethnography communication research method was used in achieving the goal of this research. The research finding indicates that the low participation to formal education is due to the fact that Sikep community has a specific interpretation of the educational process that differs to the formal standard of national education. They perceive education as a part of everyday life. They focus on the educational processes that equip them the skills to survive, particularly in the context of agricultural skills. The knowledge of local philosophical values must also be considered in creating an applicable educational system for Sikep community.

**Keywords:** speech codes, education, minority, ethnography, local discourse

## 1 Introduction

Minority groups in Indonesia can be divided into five categories: racial minorities, ethnic minorities, religious minorities, disability minorities, and gender/sexual orientation minorities[1]. Furthermore, in Indonesia, there are indigenous ethnic communities that are experiencing multiple marginalities due to the fact that they fall into more than one minority categories. Secluded ethnic groups such as Sikep community, for example, is not only a minority due to its specific customs (way of life), but Sikep community also has a local specific religion that unverified as a formal religion by the state. The effect of double marginalities is not only related to the religious practices, recognition, and freedom but it also affects the well-being of their lives. As a part of a multicultural state of Indonesia, they should have the right to maintain and develop their specific culture and belief.

The presence of minority groups in Indonesia cannot be separated from the nature of Indonesia as a multicultural country. However, the social position of minority ethnic groups such as Sikep is often regarded as an underdeveloped community so that the indigenous needs to be modernized. Numerous attempts of development or modernization that are undertaken by the government often raise many social problems. The problems usually relate to the development program

implementations that are not in line with the life principles of the indigenous peoples. Many development (modernization) efforts that attempt to change values, roles, and social systems of the minority evoke particular social problems that are counterproductive to the harmony of the multicultural Indonesian society. This paper argues that the discourse of education is a very prominent field that defines the social harmony in indigenous ethnic minorities.

The previous studies signify that the formal education has not been well received by several minority ethnic groups in Indonesia. The rejection of the formal educational system also emerges in the community of Sikep at Baturejo Village, District Sukolilo, Pati, Central Java (the subject area of this research). Because they keep their environment and nature. The previous research data indicates that there are very few children attending formal education. Most of the Sikep people who joined formal education only attended elementary school, because for the Sikep community formal education is only a matter of learning how to read and write[2].

The Sikep community has a specific educational approach that has a different focus to the formal education. Most Sikep group members still find that most of the formal educational methods and materials are not in line with their life perspectives and culture. Educational models that accommodate local cultural values or ethno-

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pedagogy are needed to increase the participation of indigenous minorities in the formal education. Ethno-pedagogy is part of a pedagogy study that explores specific aspects of culture such as structure, function, and relationships within a society[3].

## 2 Methodology

This study mainly focuses on understanding the speech codes of the local community on educational discourse. Speech Codes Theory (SCT) emphasizes the context-specific human communication study from the perspective of the communication participant[4]. This approach allows the comprehension of linkage between culture and communication. SCT believes that every time people speak, they express their culture or communication codes, by carefully observing and listening to the everyday interactions, a researcher can find the important core elements of a community's belief and value systems including the important elements in educational discourses. Therefore, the focus of this research is describing indigenous Sikep community speech codes on education.

## 3 Discussion

Educational discourse is an influential aspect for establishing social harmony. Any efforts in comprehending indigenous ethnic groups require recognition to the local educational discourse that has been inherited across generations. Understanding the local speech codes surrounding education is important in establishing an educational system that accommodates local culture and values. Thus, the main aim of this study is to comprehend the codes of educational discourse in Sikep community.

Previous studies signify the prominent of local education discourses in ethnic groups. The first research reviewed in this study is a research conducted by Peter Dunbar-Hall[5], entitled "Ethnopedagogy: Culturally Contextualized Learning and Teaching as an Agent of Change." Dunbar-Hall's research is an auto-ethnographic study based on the experiences of teaching Balinese music. This study demonstrates the need to consider the unification between teaching (music) and the surrounding transmission context. Through understanding local cultural circumstances, the educational process will be able to create a new way to integrate the local indigenous cultural perspectives in the teaching methods. The main argument of the research refers to the definition of ethno-pedagogy that relies on the aesthetic theory of learning and teaching culture. Dunbar-Hall argues that just as music differs from one culture to another, in terms of different applications on the role, value, meaning, and significance of music, how to learn and teach music also differ from place to place. How to learn and teach is loaded with the influence of local culture. Furthermore, the different ways of learning and teaching indicate the social and political positions of the music in the community. The result of Dunbar-Hall's research can be related to this Sikep study in the way it showed how the

educators who use an ethno-pedagogy approach had a better understanding of the context of the teaching materials and the local culture interpretation of music. The comprehensive knowledge on local culture enable the teachers to implement a mindful teaching approach. A mindful teacher will be able to focus on what and how cultural values emerged socially and learn the values in both personal and communal contexts.

In terms of Sikep communitiy, Munadi's[6] research on the aspects of political culture indicated that Sikep community has a unique social and political culture. According to Munadi, in Sikep community, the parents are the main educator (teacher) of their children. The parents have the responsibility to educate their own children. So almost all of the children in Sikep community never go to formal school. The parents prohibit the children to go to formal school institutions. The prohibition is due to the particular perception in the Sikep community related to the formal education. They perceive that, in the old days, the school was an institution created and established by the Dutch. Previous studies have shown how local knowledge leads the Sikep community to interpret educational institutions as a part of colonialization. Therefore, this research argues that it is important to understand the local education discourse in order to develop a mindful harmonious society.

In order to establish a harmonious community, the discourse of education needs to emphasize on the specific circumstances and characteristics of ethnic groups. Individuals within a particular cultural group are shaped by the unique way of looking at the world around them such as the expression of language, traditions, customs, traditions, and beliefs. The specific local culture perspective is emerging from environmental conditions, history, daily life, and the livelihoods of local residents. However, on the other hand, these characteristics can not be separated from the broader context of the state. The combination of these two contexts is the ethno-pedagogy specific area of study. Thus, the elements considered by ethno-pedagogy for the educational model are; local policies, social norms, cultural life, traditions, languages, beliefs, and social roles<sup>3</sup>. According to Burger[8], the basis of ethno-pedagogy is an ethnographic study with which the cultural process is understood from the perspective of the local. It is important to understand the cognitive process that underlies the cultural behaviors of the locals.

Thus, in order to understand the cultural elements within the ethnic minority community, this study analyzed local speech codes on education. Gerry Philipsen[8] formulates the definition of speech codes as sign systems of meanings relating to communicative behaviors that are constructed socially and transmitted historically. Codes, in other words, are systems or patterns of language use that are full of sociocultural significances for its users. Since the code components are interwoven with communication, the components associated with the beliefs and values structure through which the community members exercise their social life. Codes, thus include the observable social manifest, which guides people's communication practices, behaviors, and ideologies. The Sikep community members have a specific perspective on

educational discourse. They use three main codes that show how they interpret education.

The first speech codes on education is how they interpret school as a part of daily life experiences. School in the sikep community is defined as everyday life learning processes. In other words, for Sikep community the core nature of the school is informal learning. According to Sikep community, the way and what is learned in their community “school” is different from the formal school. They argue that the universe is a vast and diverse entity so that humans can study nature and life in various ways. The Sikep community rejects formal schools because they believe that what is learned in formal schools is not in line with their life purpose of being farmers and avoiding the disgraceful behavior. They claim that there is already a plenty number of people attending formal school. Therefore, they also argue that Sikep community needs to focus on other areas of education that have not been studied adequately in the formal school. They are focusing on education that teaches people on how to be a dedicated farmer and how to live together in peace and harmony.

The second education speech codes in Sikep community is the importance of agricultural skills. Basically, the meaning of school in Sikep community comprises two main elements that can be interpreted as hard skills and soft skills. The code that appears related to hard skills is perceiving school as a social arena to learn agricultural skills. Since childhood, they have been trained to have sufficient agricultural skills. For them, farming skills must be owned by men and women. Together men and women in Sikep society work on their agricultural lands. Working as a farmer is their main livelihood. The most important skills that must be learned by the member of Sikep society is agricultural skills. Therefore, they interpret school as agricultural educational processes and the main teacher in that school is the parents.

The third speech codes on education in Sikep community is that the school can be understood as an arena to teach the important values in life. Sikep has specific codes of life that can be interpreted as soft skills. The codes of life philosophy of Sikep become the core of communication behaviors rules. The codes are upheld and should be considered as the guidance for personal and social lives. The codes of philosophical values include how a person should avoid bad behaviors such as envy, arguing, quarrel, stealing, and other criminal behaviors (drengki, srei, dawen, angestren, kemeren, bedok, colong, petil, jumput). The codes must be learned and implemented by Samin community members. These values become the code of dignity for the Sikep community. If a person violates the codes, the violators will not get physical punishments or formal punishments from the community but the violators will lose their dignity in the eyes of the Sikep community. The highest penalty for those who violate the codes is no longer regarded as a part of the Sikep community.

## 4 Conclusion

This study signifies that the way people in Sikep community communicate is based on specific principles of speech codes. The codes also govern on how they interpret educational processes. The Sikep community speech codes on education signify the specific educational principles and values. There are three main codes of education in Sikep community: education as a part of everyday life, agricultural knowledge as hard skills, and specific philosophical values as soft skills. The speech codes of Sikep community also indicate how school or education is constructed as an everyday live educational process that cannot be replaced by the formal education system. Therefore, an educational process that accommodates the values of local culture is needed to increase the participation of Sikep community in formal education.

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