

# **“SAYA MAU BU!” OR “AKU MAU BU!”? FROM THE TEACHERS AND STUDENTS’ POINT OF VIEW**

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## **ABSTRACT**

*Article describes a research which purpose was to find out whether there was a shift in the use of “aku” and “saya” from the children and teenagers’ points of view as well as their teachers’s. The shift of those expressions was based on the factors of concept, family education, and the influence of media i.e. television. The objects of this research were 140 elementary and high school students as well as their teachers. Questionnaires were distributed to them. The results showed that there was a shift from the expression “saya” to “aku” in the students and teachers’ perception. However, when tested using statistics, the differences in the shift and in the perception between students and teachers concerning this matter were not significant.*

**Keywords:** *personal call, aku, saya*

## **ABSTRAK**

*Artikel menggambarkan penelitian yang menunjukkan perubahan penggunaan “aku” dan “saya” dari sudut pandang anak-anak, remaja, dan guru. Perubahan penggunaan tersebut disebabkan oleh faktor konsep, pendidikan keluarga, dan pengaruh media seperti televisi. Kuesioner disebarkan kepada 140 murid SD, SMP, dan guru. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan adanya perubahan penggunaan “saya” dan “aku” dalam persepsi murid dan guru. Hanya, ketika hasil penelitian diuji dengan statistik, perbedaan penggunaan penggunaan “saya” dan “aku” dalam persepsi murid dan guru tidak menunjukkan hasil nyata.*

**Kata kunci:** *panggilan diri, aku, saya*

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## INTRODUCTION

The expressions used to greet other people have a close relationship with politeness. The language choice in this case is done by considering some factors such as relation and formality. Holmes (2007) used the term “solidarity” to show the relation distance between the speaker and the hearer in communication. In some languages e.g. French, Indonesian, and Javanese, the way of referring to the second person is different (e.g. *tu/vous*, *kamu/anda*, *kowe/sampeyan/panjenengan*). Usually, the first is used when the participants have a close relationship or in the informal situation, while the second is used in a conversation between friends who are close or in a formal relationship. However, in other languages, such as English, the second personal pronoun *you* can be used at any situation to anybody.

Indonesian has two terms referring to the first person i.e. *aku* and *saya* which are used differently. In *Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia – The Indonesian Dictionary* (2009:32), it is said that *aku* is used for a close relation i.e. the participants have a close and informal relationship and both of them have a same status in the society such as friends or when they are talking with the younger person or person who have a lower status. Meanwhile, the expression *saya* is used when the participants have a formal relationship or when the hearer has a higher status. The question in the title “*Saya* mau, Bu.” or “*Aku* mau Bu.” is uttered in the conversation between a student and his teacher. The problem is which one is theoretically and practically considered to be accepted by the students and teachers.

The relationship between students and their teachers should be included in a formal relationship as teachers are the people whose position and status are higher than those of the students’. In this relationship, a student should use *saya* to refer to himself. However, there are some phenomenon that there is a shift from the word *saya* into *aku* in the communication between students and teachers. Examples: Ma’am, “*aku*” mau ngambil pelajaran di semester depan, . . . . “*aku*” juga mau tanya .... Mama bilang ‘*saya*’ memang keras kepala .... ‘*saya*’ kalau belajar suka ingat masalah ‘*saya*’ .... Aduuh gimana ya Ma’m padahal “*aku*” ingin lulus .... Kata mama ‘*saya*’ sih memang keras kepala ..... (Dewi, 2007). In this example, we can see that the expressions *aku* and *saya* in the communication between students and their teachers have been used interchangeably without any specific reason.

In media, there are more and more people, especially artists, use *aku* when being interviewed, although the television is watched by children and teenagers. As children and teenagers cannot be separated from their environments at home, school and media, this research intends to see the influence of those factors in children and teenagers in using *aku* and *saya*. This research also continues the one carried out by Dewi (2007), who made a research on the use of these expression in which the results showed that there was a shift from the use of *saya* and it was replaced by using the word *aku*. However, Dewi’s research was not tested by using statistics so the scale of whether the shift and the different views between teachers and students were significant or not was not known.

The main problem in this research is to see whether there is a significant difference between students and teachers’ perception between elementary and highschool students representing children and teenagers and teachers in using the expressions *aku* and *saya*. This problem can be seen by testing two hypotheses as follows:

- Hypothesis (H<sub>0</sub>) : There is no significant difference between students and teachers’ perception in the use of *aku* and *saya*.
- Alternation (H<sub>1</sub>) : There is significant difference between students and teachers’ perception in the use of *aku* and *saya*.

In details, this research also discusses the use of *aku* and *saya* by using the following criteria: concept, family education, and influence of media.

*Kamus Besar Bahasa Indonesia* (the Indonesian Dictionary) states that *aku* is used to refer to “*ragam tidak resmi*” (informal variety of language) (2009a) that is the informal conversation between close friends (2009b), while *saya* is used in the formal variety of language in the formal relation and situation, especially in a formal writing such as: non fiction or oral language, such as in a formal writing or in giving lecture. Alwi. et al. (2003) had same idea and added that *aku* tends to be used in the fiction of poetry. Furthermore, Jennar (2008) explained that “The pronoun *aku* is commonly described as an intimate and informal pronoun and hence it is generally associated with interpersonal domains. *Saya*, on the other hand, is generally described as a neutral and formal pronoun and is considered the appropriate choice for public contexts.”

However, recently, Dewi (2007), Jenar (2008), and Ruddyanto put forward that there was a tendency that *aku* and *saya* were used in a different way. Dewi (2007) made a research among university students in order to see how *aku* and *saya* were used in a communication between students and teachers. The results showed that there was a tendency that students used *aku* and not *saya* to refer to themselves when communicating with teachers. In this case, students and teachers had different perceptions dealing with some factors, assuming to influence students such as: concept, family education, and media. Besides from this research, it was found that teachers still expected that students used *saya* when communicating with them. In general, teachers had the opinion that students had family education regarding the use of *aku* and *saya*. The interesting thing was that students did not feel that they were educated by their parents. The different perception could also be seen in terms of the influence of media. Students said that they were not influenced by television programs, but teachers insisted that they were influenced. Unfortunately, this research was not supported by statistics test so the significancy of different perception between students and teachers was not revealed.

In 2008, Jenar made a research by observing celebrities who were in TV programs. The results showed that there were some reasons for them to use *aku* instead of *saya*. The first reason was they wanted to be considered as modern people. Another reason was by using *aku*, they felt that they were independent.

Ruddyanto (<http://pusatbahasa.diknas.go.id>) put forward his assumption that in society, it was really true that there was a shift in using *aku* and *saya*, especially in young generation. He told his experience when he had a conversation with a shop assistant who used expression of *aku* when serving him. In this case, Ruddyanto gave comments that the shop assistant should “*bersikap hormat untuk memikat saya agar tertarik membeli dagangannya – saya dapati mereka dengan nyaman mengutamakan sikap berakrab-akrab daripada hormat*” (instead of trying to respect him, so that he would buy something, the shop assistant preferred to pretend to be close). Ruddyanto also got shocked when one of his new employees used *aku* when talking to him as his supervisor.

The shift in using *aku* and *saya* appears not only in practice, but also in theory i.e. in a reference which might be read by many people such as in *Bahasa Kita Website* (<http://www.bahasakita.com/glossary/s/>) in which it is stated that *saya* and *aku* can be used in formal and informal situation. Whoever wrote in this website, actually, considers that there is no difference in the use of *aku* and *saya*. In this case, Badudu (2001) also states that *aku* shows a close relationship – usually used in family relationship and close friends. Besides, *aku* is often used when talking to the hearers who are younger or having a lower position than the speaker.

Every language can change from time to time. The change, according to Holmes (2001), can be from group to group, based on age, location, and gender. The change can also happen because of the influence of media, especially from the prominents who have a lot of followers or celebrities who have a lot of fans.

Holmes (2001) and Bonvillain (2003) also mentioned some other factors influencing the language choice such as setting – the place of event/conversation, participants – the speaker and listener, topic – what is being talked about, and goal of the conversation. Holmes (2001) also described that the closer the relationship between participants, the more informal the language and content of conversation. For example is language of gossiping. However, the farther the relationship of participants is, the more informal the language, e.g. language of newspaper, or language of a speech.

The choice of language varieties has a close relationship with politeness. A person can be considered to be polite if he is able to keep other's face. In this case, 'face' means "a person's self image in front of the public (Yule, 2006:104). In general, people would like to keep their 'faces' in front of the public, meaning they do not want to be embarrassed or humiliated in front of other people and want to be treated in accordance to their role in society where they live. By being treated like that, they will feel that they are appreciated. In this case, the use of appropriate expressions would help people to keep other's face.

This research intends to know whether there is a different perception between students and teachers in using the expression *aku* and *saya*, based on the formal or standard of the use of *aku* and *saya*, i.e. *saya* for formal relationship and *aku* for informal relationship. The relationship between students and teachers are considered to be formal as there is a difference in their age, group, and especially status. Therefore, it is really expected that students use the word *saya* when speaking to their teachers. The assumption is that students would use *saya* when speaking to their teachers. This is especially done, so that the students can be considered to be polite and teachers would feel that their face would not be 'damaged'. We can also say that the teachers would feel that their students appreciate them.

As politeness is one of expected attitudes in getting along with others, parents should struggle and educate their children, so that their children would have this politeness. They educate children to be not only smart, but also good. In this case, the result of research can be used by parent, education institutions, and educators in creating a polite generation in using a language.

For schools, the results of this research can become one of feedbacks to recheck curriculum for ethics course or language course, so that children will be able to show appropriate attitude that can be accepted in the society. Also, it is expected that parents can encourage their children to increase not only the children's intelligence quotient, but also in children's ethics by using everyday language. By doing this, the children will be influenced and future generation will have strengths not only in their hardskill, but also softskill as well.

Moreover, if the result of research shows that there is a shift, the educators and parents should be wise in facing their children. They should not judge their children as 'having' no politeness when they speak by using *aku*. Nevertheless, when the shift still becomes a phenomenon, the linguists should be able to make assumption about what will happen next with two expressions and think about a strategic action in educating students by using language, meaning to think about strategic method in teaching politeness by using language.

Purpose of research is to know the different perception of students and teachers regarding the use of *aku* and *saya* in theory and practice between teenagers and children. In details, we can see the differences in their concept, family education, and media. Subject of this research are children and teenagers. They are represented in the students from elementary schools and high school students together with their teachers.

## **Method**

Data were taken from two schools in Jakarta. They were *Tiara Kasih Elementary School* and *Sekolah Negeri SD 02*, and *SMP 176* together with their teachers. The areas were the students and

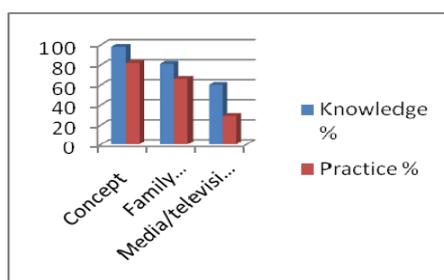
teachers' concept of *aku* and *saya*, and the real practice. The information regarding *aku* and *saya* was obtained by giving questionnaires to 140 students from both schools and 10 teachers. Thus, this research did not only see whether there was a difference in the perception between teachers and students, but also to see the practice according to them.

## DISCUSSION

This research aimed to find out the students and teachers' opinion regarding the concept and practice of students dealing with the expressions *aku* and *saya*; the influence of family education, and the media such as television program. In this research, the questionnaires were not only distributed to the students, but also to the teachers. In general, the result of this research shows that there is a difference between knowledge and practice from the students and teachers' perceptions regarding the use of *aku* and *saya*. In Table 1, we can see that regarding the knowledge in students' perception, the percentage of students who inform that they know the concept, is higher than the number of students who say that they practice it. Ninety eight percent students know the concept of how to use *aku* and *saya*, but only 82 percent use it in practicing with teachers. It means that there are students who know that they should use *saya* to their teachers, but they use *aku* instead. The reasons of using other terms of address can be various; from the close relationship of them, or formal and informal situation. In family, 81 percent students say that their parents told them how to use *aku* and *saya*, but only 60 percent students practice it within the family. Most of the reasons regarding family are the use of nicknames instead of *aku* or *saya*. Regarding the media, only 60 percent students say that television has influenced children and teenagers in general in choosing *aku* and *saya*. However, there are only 29 percent students who admit that they are influenced. This figure shows that students are aware that there are many television programs using *aku* instead of *saya*. However, they do not think that those programs influence them. Instead, there is a possibility that they have opinion that the use of *aku* instead of *saya* is just a common thing and do not break any rules.

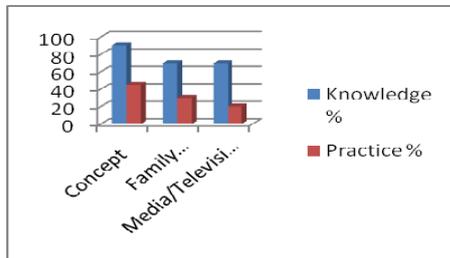
According to the teachers, students know the concepts of *aku* and *saya*, but most of them say that they do not practice it in communicating with their teachers. Ninety percent teachers say that the students know the concept, but only 45 percent teachers state that the students practice their knowledge of concept. The teachers have such opinions as they think that students must have got the knowledge from family and school. However, in practice, they find out that the students do not use *saya* to them. Seventy percent teachers also put forward their opinion that the students got the information from their parents, how to use *aku* and *saya*, but only 30 percent teachers say that the students practice their knowledge in family. In this case, teachers say that in their own family, they teach their children not only use *saya* to refer to themselves, but also use nicknames or their vernaculars such as Javanese or Sundanese. Regarding the influence of television programs, 20 percent teachers say that the students are influenced by speakers in television, but 70 percent say that the students know that television can influence children and teenagers in using *aku* and *saya* (Table 2).

Table 1 Students' Knowledge and Practice According to the Students



	Knowledge %	Practice %
Concept	98	82
Family education	81	66
Media/television	60	29

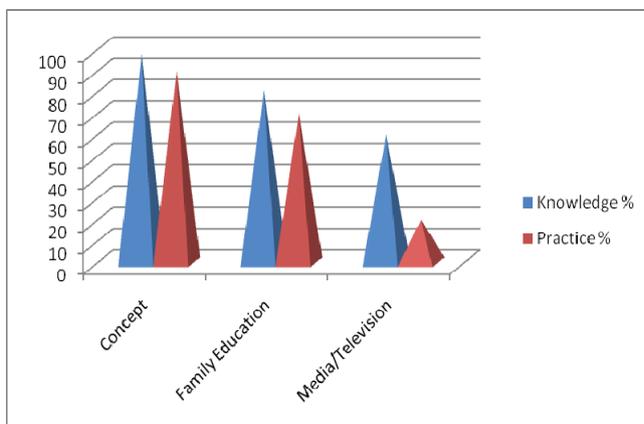
Table 2 Students' Knowledge and Practice According to the Teachers



	Knowledge %	Practice %
Concept	90	45
Family Education	70	30
Media/Television	70	20

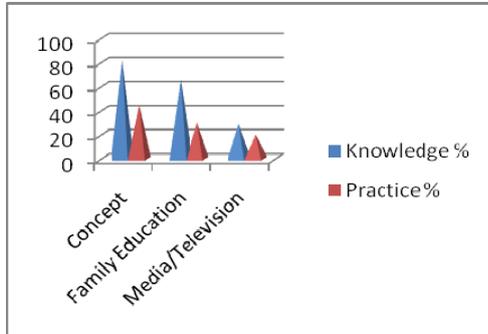
When we compare the knowledge of the expressions *aku* and *saya* and the practice, between the students and teachers' perception in Table 3 and Table 4, it is clearly seen that the percentage of the students is higher except in the influence of the television program. In Table 3, we can see that both students and teachers agree that conceptually students know the difference between *aku* and *saya* (98 percent students and 90 percent teachers). Also, most of students and teachers have the same opinions that in general students have been informed about the use of *aku* and *saya*. Regarding the influence of the television program, about two thirds of students and teachers assume that students imitate the speakers on television. In general, both teachers and students have the same opinion that the percentage of students practicing the knowledge is less than their knowledge. However, teachers are more pessimistic and except for the television influence. The percentage of the teachers who said that students practice their knowledge about *aku* and *saya* is only half of that of the students. Eighty two percent students think that they practice the knowledge but there are only 45% teachers agree on that matter. It might happen because teachers have got the experience that their students use *aku* when communicating with them. Sixty percent students state that they practice the use of *aku* and *saya* at home, but again only thirty percent teachers say so. Teachers are very pessimistic that students practice *aku* and *saya* even in the family. According to the teachers' opinion, there are only twenty nine students imitated the speakers on television and again, and only twenty percent students feel that they imitate the speakers on television.

Table 3 Students' Knowledge in Using *Aku* and *Saya* According to Students and Teachers



	Knowledge %	Practice %
Concept	98	90
Family Education	81	70
Media/Television	60	20

Table 4 Students' Practice in using *Aku* and *Saya* According to the Students and Teachers



	Knowledge %	Practice %
Concept	82	45
Family Education	66	30
Media/Television	29	20

### Statistical Analysis

From the percentage analysis, we can see that there is a difference between the students and teachers' perception regarding the use of *aku* and *saya* in theory and practice. Nevertheless, the difference should be tested statistically whether it is significant or not. The statistics test was carried out using Chi Square. Process of the calculation is as follows:

Hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) : There is no significant difference between students and teachers' perception regarding the shift of expression *saya* to *aku*

Alternation ( $H_1$ ) : There is a significant difference between students and teachers' perception regarding the shift from *saya* to *aku*

The test was carried out using the *chi-square* and in order to see the result of the hypothesis test, the calculation was done as follows. From the data in questionnaires given to the students, we can obtain that.

First is for the variable the knowledge of the use of *aku* and *saya* (Table 5).

Table 5 Contingency between the Respondents and Questions A (1-4)

Respondents	Question 1	Question 2	Question 3	Question 4	Total
Students	<sup>a</sup> 137/137,7	<sup>b</sup> 114/114,1	<sup>c</sup> 84/85,8	<sup>d</sup> 97/94,3	<b>432</b>
Teachers	<sup>f</sup> 9/8,3	<sup>g</sup> 7/6,9	<sup>h</sup> 7/5,2	<sup>i</sup> 3/5,7	<b>26</b>
Total	146	121	91	100	<b>458</b>

In order to see whether the difference in those frequencies is significant or not, the technic of Chi-Quadrant is used.

$$\text{The expected frequency is } f_h = \frac{\text{Number of rows}}{\text{Total}} * m \backslash \text{number of columns;}$$

thus:

$$f_h \text{ (column a)} = \frac{432}{458} * 146 = 137,7$$

$$f_h \text{ (column c)} = \frac{432}{458} * 91 = 85,8$$

$$f_h \text{ (column g)} = \frac{26}{458} * 121 = 6,9$$

$$f_h \text{ (column)} = \frac{26}{458} * 91 = 5,2$$

$$f_h \text{ (column b)} = \frac{432}{458} * 121 = 114,1$$

$$f_h \text{ (column d)} = \frac{432}{458} * 100 = 94,3$$

$$f_h \text{ (column f)} = \frac{26}{458} * 146 = 8,3$$

$$f_h \text{ (column i)} = \frac{26}{458} * 100 = 5,7$$

The degree of freedom is  $db = (\text{rows} - 1) (\text{columns} - 1) = (2 - 1) (4 - 1) = 3$ ; then, the working table for  $f_0$  and  $f_h$  in calculating using the chi-square is:

$$X^2 = \sum \frac{(O_i - E_i)^2}{E} = \frac{(137-137,7)^2}{137,7} + \frac{(114-141,1)^2}{141,1} + \frac{(84-85,8)^2}{85,8} + \frac{(97-94,3)^2}{94,3} + \frac{(9-8,3)^2}{8,3} + \frac{(7-6,9)^2}{6,9} + \frac{(7-5,2)^2}{5,2} + \frac{(3-5,7)^2}{5,7}$$

$$X^2 = 0,003 + 5,20 + 0,0377 + 0,0773 + 0,0590 + 0,0014 + 0,6231 + 1,2789$$

$$X^2 = \mathbf{7,2880}$$

Second is for the variable the practice of the expressions *aku* and *saya*. With the same calculation as the above, the second variable i.e. the practice of the use of *aku* and *saya* is calculated and the result can be seen in Table 6.

Table 6 Contingency between Respondents and Questions B (1-4)

<i>Respondents</i>	<i>Question 1</i>	<i>Question 2</i>	<i>Question 3</i>	<i>Question 4</i>	<i>Total</i>
<i>Students</i>	<sup>a</sup> 79/78,6	<sup>b</sup> 62/61,11	<sup>c</sup> 22/22,2	<sup>d</sup> 22/23,1	<b>185</b>
<i>Teachers</i>	<sup>f</sup> 6/6,4	<sup>g</sup> 4/4,91	<sup>h</sup> 2/1,8	<sup>i</sup> 3/1,9	<b>15</b>
<i>Total</i>	85	66	24	25	<b>200</b>

The degree of freedom is  $db = (\text{rows} - 1) (\text{columns} - 1) = (2 - 1) (4 - 1) = 3$ ; then, the working table for  $f_0$  and  $f_h$  in calculating using the chi-square is:

$$X^2 = \sum \frac{(O_i - E_i)^2}{E} = \frac{(79-78,4)^2}{78,4} + \frac{(62-61,1)^2}{61,1} + \frac{(22-22,2)^2}{22,2} + \frac{(22-23,1)^2}{23,1} + \frac{(6-6,4)^2}{6,4} + \frac{(4-4,9)^2}{4,9} + \frac{(2-1,8)^2}{1,8} + \frac{(3-1,9)^2}{1,9}$$

$$X^2 = 0,004 + 0,0002 + 0,001 + 0,052 + 0,025 + 0,165 + 0,022 + 0,636$$

$$X^2 = \mathbf{0,9052}$$

Table 7 Results of the Test Using Chi Square

<i>Respondents: Students and Teachers</i>	<i>Pearson Chi Square Calculation</i>	<i>Chi Square Tabel (<math>\alpha=5%</math>)</i>
The variable of the use of the expressions <i>aku</i> dan <i>saya</i>	7,2880	7,815
The variable of the use of the expressions <i>aku</i> dan <i>saya</i>	0,9050	7,815

From Table 7, it can be seen that the Chi Square calculation (Pearson Chi Square) < Chi Square table for  $\alpha=5%$ . So, from this condition, it can be concluded that there is no significant differences between students and teachers regarding the knowledge and practice of the use of expressions *aku* dan *saya* ( $H_0$  is accepted). In other words, students and teachers feel that the use of *aku* and *saya* is still same as the ones in theory.

## CONCLUSION

This research intends to see whether there is a shift in the use of *aku* and *saya* among children and teenagers from the students and teachers' perceptions. The specific factors considered are the concept of students, family education, and influence of media; in this case is television. In both views, other factors are knowledge and practice of the use of *aku* and *saya*. Based on the knowledge, students are sure that they know difference between the concepts of *aku* and *saya*. They also have self confidence that their parents tell them how to use *aku* and *saya*. In general, they agree that they are influenced by television, but not much. The result shows that the percentage of students practicing the theory of *aku* and *saya* is lower than the percentage of those who know it. Regarding the family education, both students and teachers have opinion that most students were told how to use *aku* and *saya* from their parents. However, in practice, the percentage of teachers who said that students use the expression *saya* appropriately is lower than that of the students'. The results of the third factor i.e. the influence of media television indicates that conceptually, the percentage of teachers who have opinion that the students are influenced by programs in television is higher than that of the students. In short, we can say that there is a shift in the use of from *aku* and *saya* and also a difference in students and teachers' perception regarding this matter. However, the statistics test shows that this difference is not significant.

This research implies that at least some actions need not to be taken immediately, regarding the use of *aku* and *saya* as the students and teachers tend to maintain the use of *aku* and *saya*, according to the theory. However, the percentage shows that there is about twenty percent showing the shift. In this case, it seems that teachers are more aware of the changing as they communicate directly with the students. In this case, the linguists should take a precaution that there is a tendency although very small, by doing further research in other cities. Besides, as other researchers (Dewi, 2007; Jennar, 2008; and Ruddyanto, <http://pusatbahasa.diknas.go.id>), show that there is a shift among college students, artists, and society dealing with the use of *aku* and *saya*. This research should be repeated within another two years and it should be completed with the observations, in order to know the reality and not only the opinion.

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