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Article

The Factors that Influence the Language Shift among Parents

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ABSTRACT

Due to the massive use of Indonesian in the non-formal domain, it has influenced the existence of Aceh Language as the heritage language among Acehnese people. This study aims to find out the factors that influence the language shift on the use of the Acehnese language as a means of communication both in written and spoken forms in non-formal domains. The study employed a descriptive qualitative methodwith data gathered based on semi-structured interviews. The participants are 10 female parents from Lhokseumawe City, Aceh Province. The result shows in term of spoken, the language shift among Acehnese parents are influenced by their level of education and negative attitude towards the Acehnese language. While in written forms, the language shift among Acehnese parents is due to the efficient use of written form in the Indonesian language instead of the Acehnese language which does not yet have a standard language reference program to be used.

Keywords: Parents' Attitude, Language Shift, Heritage Language

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INTRODUCTION

A Language is used in various domains namely, religion, family, education, and local domain (Aziz & Amery, 2016). Initially, Bahasa Indonesia was chosen as a national language because it was considered that it does not threaten the local languages which are part of the multicultural identity of the Indonesian heterogonous community (Septiyana & Margiansyah, 2018). Aceh Province is located in the northern tip of Sumatera Island. Acehnese language is one of the local languages used in Aceh province among other local languages. Aceh province has 13 local languages namely Aneuk Jamee, Singkil, Gayo, Alas, Tamiang, Kluet, Devayan, Sigulai, Pakpak, Haloban, Lekon, and Nias (Pillai & Yusuf, 2012). However, Acehnese Language or Bahasa Aceh is the local language that has the biggest speakers among other local languages.

Acehnese language embodies the unique identity of the Acehnese people. As a heritage language, the Acehnese language reflects the cultural values as part of the uniqueness of Aceh province that is dubbed as a veranda of mecca, world-famous saman dancing, unique cuisine, and traditional wedding ceremonies ((Amery, 2019). As one of the Indonesian heritage languages, the Acehnese language reflects the Acehnese culture and transmits its culture from one generation to the next. It becomes the easy marker of the

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recognization of Acehnese people who live in Aceh province with rich religious cultures and reflect the way of thinking and the way life of Acehnese. In addition to that, according to Ansori (2019), a heritage language has functions as a means of interaction and identity of speakers, entertainment, other purposes in a non-formal context. Therefore, Acehnese should be spoken in non-formal domains such as markets, recreational places, cafeterias, and so forth. While Bahasa Indonesia is used in formal domains such as educational places, formal events, and government offices.

However, there is the tendency that Acehnese people today are more favoured in using Bahasa Indonesia in the speech community in almost all public domains that they consider are "cool places" such as supermarkets and cafeterias that Indonesian should not necessarily be used. Many studies have been done on the reluctant use of Acehnese language among the young generation, They consider that Acehnese language is not cool, unsophisticated language and language is spoken for rustic people (Al-auwal, 2017; Aziz et al., 2016). Ansori (2019) points out that one of the reasons the language becomes extinct is because their speakers are ashamed and not confident to speak their heritage language because they consider their heritage language is not the language for science, language for rustic people and old-fashioned language.

The Acehnese language approximately is spoken by around 3 million people. However, the big size number of speakers can not guarantee the existence of the language is in a safe position (Ravindranath & Cohn, 2014) if the domain of the language keeps decreasing because when the language loses its domain meaning it loses its speakers that indicates to language extinction. Acehnese language in general is spoken language and not like Javanese or Sundanese languages which are already well documented, Acehnese is still underdocumented. Therefore the phenomenom of the Acehnese people being reluctant to speak Acehnese is going trend nowadays. Acehnese people tend to shift their language to the Indonesian language in non-formal domain that becomes the red signal for Acehnese language existence.

Previous studies have been widely focused on the shift of language among young Acehnese, therefore, this study focuses on the factors that influence the language shift that parents use both in written and spoken forms in non formal domains among parents in Lhokseumawe, Aceh Province. The social media used by parents is limited in this study only Facebook and Whats' App applications in written form and the use of Acehnese language in spoken form is in cafeterias and market places. Therefore, this study aims to find out two following issues: 1) What are the factors that influence the shift of Acehnese language among Acehnese parents in written form in social media (Facebook and WhatsApp applications) as a means of communication? 2) What are the factors that influence the language shift among parents in spoken form in non-formal domains (cafeterias, cellphone counters, and marketplaces)?.

Language shift may lead to language endangerment and it happens when the dominant language of speech community is gradually replaced by a new primary language as a means of communication (Abtahian et al., 2016), and the use of one particular language of other two or more languages keep losing its domain in the speech community. In addition, language shift happens when the speakers would rather speak another language rather than their mother tongue therefore their heritage languages are abandoned because the other language is more dominant (Al-auwal, 2017). It does not just happen to a language with minority speakers but also to a language with majority speakers such as Javanese, Sundanese, and Maduranes languages (Ansori, 2019; Ravindranath & Cohn, 2014).

The language becomes endangered when they are used in fewer and fewer situations and its domain keeps shrinking especially in areas of education, government, and economic livelihood (Ewing, 2014). Therefore, when the speakers are less and less in speaking their indigenous language as a speech community, it finally leads to language extinction (Hidayati et al., 2020).





Several factors have resulted in the shift of indigenous language usage including bilingualism, social and economic factors, politics, migration, attitude, and the values held by indigenous speakers (Nurani, 2015; Sulistiyaningsih, Siti et al., 2017; Ulfa, 2018b). A study conducted by Setiawan (2020; as cited in Ansori, 2019) toward young Javanese speakers in Semarang indicates social factors and demographic factors influence the language shift of Javanese teenagers.

A similar finding also was found in Suharsono's study (1995 as cited in Nurani, 2015) that the attitude of young Javanese has changed drastically into a negative attitude within the last two decades toward their local language. In line with this, the study on the Acehnese attitudes towards their heritage language within three generations in the family domain in Bireun City, Aceh, shows that the use of Bahasa Aceh is shifting to The Indonesian language with the third generation participants (Aziz, Z. A., Yusuf, Y. Q., & Aulia, 2021).

In addition to that, Arka, (2015) postulates the crucial action to raise the awareness of language speakers from negative impact as a consequence of local language shift, and the native speakers of the indigenous language have to be motivated to act for their heritage language maintenance.

Furthermore, linguistic insecurity can result in language shifts. Meyerhoff (2006, as cited in (Hildebrandt & Hu, 2017) points out that linguistic insecurity can hamper someone to speak a particular language because of feeling a lack of linguistic competence and the speakers feel inferior, ugly or bad when they use the particular language. This situation is also found in a study conducted by Poejosoedarmo (2006 as cited in Cohn 2014) and (Cohn & Abtahian, 2017) that the less competence in using *krama* level by young Javanese generation has made them reluctant to speak *krama* in a speech community.

Furthermore, the Javanese was the language with the greatest number of first language speakers in Indonesia, but the percentage of the population who spoke it as their first language was declining and has been discussed in academic forums. Prior to 1990, regional languages were used as the medium of instruction in the first three grades of primary school in many places, and it was common in Javanese-speaking areas. Since 1990, it is government policy that Indonesian should be used as the language of education from kindergarten through to University. However, another policy was also promulgated in various forms between 1989 and 1993 which requires the teaching of one compulsory local content subject and up to three optional subjects in the primary education curriculum alongside the national curriculum (Musgrave, 2014). Nuraini further mentions other important factors that accelerate people to maintain their native language or to shift to another language namely socio-historical processes, institutional support, educational attainment, and intermarriage. Socio-historical refers to the historical role of a language as a medium to unite the member of the community such as the Indonesian language chosen to unite all ethnic groups and becomes lingua franca. Institutional support corresponds with the official support toward a particular language. women is important ambassador to their native language culture meaning gender plays a significant role in language shift (Tatar, 2015).

Furthermore, Nuraini also finds that children's attitude toward Javanese is negative and think that Javanese is a difficult, old-fashioned, and not cool language but have a positive attitude to Indonesian. They construe that Javanese is not a language for science, technology, or business. Although another study indicates different results that children in East Java have a positive attitude toward their local language Suharsono's study (1995, as cited in Nuraini, Disertasi) which indicates the language attitude of young Javanese has extremely changed within two decades. five factors influence language shift namely economic, social, political, demographic, and attitudinal (holmes 2001, as cited in Nuraini). Kurniasih (2005) states based on her study to language shift of Javanese in Yogyakarta. She points out that children from the middle class prefer speaking Bahasa Indonesia to Javanese. In contrast, children from a working class prefer speaking the Javanese language to Bahasa Indonesia. She further adds that gender plays a significant role in the intergenerational



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transmission of language in Yogyakarta. She further mentions that parents, grandparents, and other adult members of the family are the main resources for children in learning and acquiring Javanese.

Previous studies indicated the language shift happened in the speech community among Acehnese people due to the dominant usage of Bahasa Indonesia. The study showed the factors that influence the language shift among Acehnese people. The study conducted by Hidayati et al., (2020) among young Acehnese in Medan city indicates that successful and social status factors as the main reasons of language shift among Acehnese. The shift of Acehnese Language to the Indonesian language among Acehnese people happens because of language preference, habit, and their environment (Ulfa, 2018a). Ulfa on her study to 30 young Acehnese in Langsa City points out that the educational background of friends becomes the first factor that causes the shift of Acehnese language among young people in Langsa City.

Language shift has been taking place and continuee to take place in Indonesia. Since the installation of Bahasa Indonesia as the national language in 1945 has gained numerous speakers of Indonesian through to the population and has been used either as a first language or second language. The effect of educational policy which imposes local content (muatan local) in primary curriculum applies in Maluku does not affect the same way as in Java (Musgrave, 2014) home environment in Jave is conducive to language transmission than that on Maluku that at least some parents are using Javanese in the home but not in central Maluku where local language use at home has been ceased at all which lead to pessimistic for language survival.

Parents Attitude and Language shift

Parents' attitude on the use of Indonesian in non-formal domains including home and public places have given significant contribution to the process of language shift because parents havea crucial role in passing their heritage language to their children. Besides, In parents have massive interaction with their children (Kurniasih 2005) Therefore, parents' perspective and their attitudes determined whether the HL can survive or extinct because parents' have important role and can choose whether to transmit their heritage language to the children or they abandon it. Educational factor as one of social factor can cause the language shift (Abtahian et al., 2016; Al-auwal, 2017; Alamsyah et al., 2011)

Many researchers have discussed the significant influence of Parents' attitudes and their perception related to the transmission process of heritage language (HL) in family domain and become pivotal factors for indigenous language maintenance (Al-auwal, 2017; Alamsyah et al., 2011; Cohn & Abtahian, 2017; Kheirkhah & Cekaite, 2015; Kismullah, 2017; Kurniasih, 2005; Liang, 2018; Nurani, 2015; Tatar, 2015), and parents' perception to their HL can result in either language preservation or language loss (Attaallah, 2020; Gkaintartzi et al., 2016; Gupta, 2020; Serrano-hidalgo, 2018; Yan, 2002).

METHOD

This research is designed based on descriptive qualitative in order to explore the issue of language shift both in written and spoken forms on the usage of the heritage language among Acehnese parents in non-formal domains in one of the suburbs in Lhokseumawe City, Aceh Province. The research which adopts a qualitative approach is to comprehend the issue of an individual or group phenomena toward social or human problems (Creswell, 2014 p.32). In the qualitative method, the researcher needs to do interpretation, exploration, description on the quality and the characteristics of the concept Hale & Napier (2013). Furthermore, the data employed in this study is conveyed in the form of words gathered from the in-depth interview excerpts as primary data.

The participants of this research are 10 participants from one of the suburbs in Lhokseumawe, Aceh Province. All participants were selected by using purposive sampling. The participants are parents of native Acehnese people who were born and reside in Lhokseumawe City. The participants are from 25 years old to 47 years old. The participants





in this research are married couples both from endogamy married. They are also from different educational backgrounds. Four participants are senior high school graduates and six participants are higher degree graduates. The Respondents were coded as follows: in.45.P1. nH (participant's initial, participant's age, participant number, not Higher Degree graduate). Li.32.P2.H (participant's initial, participant's age, participant number, Higher Degree graduate).

Table 1. shows detailed information about the background of all the participants.

Participants	Educational	Age of	Number of Children
Initial	Background	Participants	
Mrs. Ba	Bachelor Degree	32 Years	1 Daughter
			1 son
Mrs. Ma	Diploma	27 Years	2 Daughters
Mrs. Ag	Diploma	30 Years	1 daughter
			1son
Mrs. Ya	Senior High School	25 years	1 Daughter
			1 Son
Mrs. Li	Diploma	32 years	3 sons
Mrs. In	Senior High school	47 years	2 Daughters
			1 son
Mrs. Mu	Senior High school	38 Years	2 Daughters
			1 Son
Mrs. Ti	Senior High school	46 Years	4 Sons
			2 Daughters
Mrs. Nu	Senior High school	47 Years	4 Sons
	-		5 Daughters
Mrs. Cu	Master	33 Year	2 Daughters

In order to collect the data, an in-depth semi-structured interview was conducted in this research. The data was gathered by visiting the participants one by one to their homes. The interview was conducted after the agreements were acquired. Each session of interviews was recorded by the voice recorder tool. The interview questions consisted of five questions and each of interview lasted from 8 to 15 minutes. The interview was conducted in the Acehnese language.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The Factors that Influence the Acehnese Language Shift In the Use of Social Media (What's App and Facebook Platforms)

Most of the participants feel more convenient using the Indonesian language because it is easy to write and read rather than in the Acehnese language when using WhatsApp and Facebook platforms. In addition to that, some participants admitted that they wanted to avoid the misunderstanding of using Acehnese when texting. They admitted that they do not have standard knowledge of Acehnese writing. The majority of participants mentioned that they use Acehnese when they are on phone calls. One of the participants declared that she keeps using the Indonesian language when texting with her father to avoid the error and misunderstanding of writing in the Acehnese language. The following are the statements of two participants:

E1." I use the Indonesian language in WhatsApp or Facebook because language preference for Acehnese language is not available." Ag.32.P3.H





E2."I keep texting in Bahasa Indonesia if I communicate with my father because he has difficulty in understanding the texting if I know to type it in Bahasa Aceh" Ma.27.P2.H

They also acknowledged they do not know the standard writing of Acehnese language therefore they tried to avoid misconceptions when writing in Acehnese language but some other participants seem not to be bothered with this issue and keep writing in Acehnese language.

The Factors that Influence the Langauge Shift Among Acehnese Parents in Spoken form (cafeterias, the cellphone counter, and market places)

Two crucial factors influence the language shift among Acehnese parents in terms of spoken form, namely, educational factors and a negative attitude of parents. Parents who are from higher degree graduates are not confident to speak their heritage language. They are confident to speak the Indonesian language to their friends particularly those who are their previous classmates when they were in university. E is shortened from Excerpt. The following are the excerpt of an interview from two participants:

E3. "I speak Indonesian when I meet my friends who were used to be my classmates at university." Ba.32.H

E4. "I speak Acehnese if I want to buy fish or vegetable with the seller, however, when I go to the cellular phone shop, I always use Bahasa Indonesia." Ma.27.H

Another factor that causes the parents to switch their language to Indonesian is the negative attitude of parents to their heritage language. Mothers who are from higher educational backgrounds tend to consider that Indonesian is a prominent language to speak compared to the parents who are educational background is not from university graduates. This tendency is due to the phenomenon that Indonesian is considered a cool language and high-class language that is used by middle-class and educated people. Therefore, the Indonesian language is considered a prestigious language, however, the indigenous language is a language for bumpkin country people. They prefer to speak the Indonesian language in places that are considered "cool places" such as cafeterias, cellphone counters, and supermarket places. However, the parents use the Acehnese language when they go to the "uncool places" such as the fish market, parents tend to speak the Acehnese language with people who are "not fashioned people". However, parents who are not from higher institution graduates are confident to speak their heritage language without feeling embarrassed in using their language to anyone. Here is the excerpt from the interview:

E5. "We should speak Acehnese of course. People are so snobbish if they are ashamed of their language. If they are not Acehnese then we need to speak the Indonesian language" In.47.nH

DISCUSSION

The tendency of parents who are more convenient to use the Indonesian language in written form is because Acehnese is still not yet well documented. Therefore, the use of the Acehnese language in social media platforms is considered not efficient. Thus, serious action needs to be done to put prevent the shift of the Acehnese language in written form. Therefore, the role of decision-makers and stakeholders such as the provincial and district governments to address these trends is urgently needed. Deliberate language policy is required to raise awareness and to preserve the Acehnese language and other local languages in Aceh province and are equally recognized and valued along with Bahasa Indonesia in the public sphere. Acehnese language and other local languages should be able





to be seen and heard in the media, radio and television, as well as in drama and film. Local languages need a place within education alongside Bahasa Indonesia and English. There needs to be literature, storybooks, online learning material, mobile phone application, electronic games, etc, in order to support their profile within the community because Acehnese language should be able to adapt to the massive development of digital technology and the use of social media platforms that have been part of social life today among the Acehnese parents.

Parents are intimidated speaking Acehnese among their speech community, this leads to the alarming issues of linguistic security, that their indigenous language is their foreign language and they are not confident to speak it and feel insecure to speak it within their speech community. This is because parents who are from higher educational backgrounds have much opportunity to be exposed to the usage of the Indonesian language. Therefore, they are not used to speaking it then they feel awkward speaking it. The worse scenario is that they have been intimidated by the Indonesian language within their speech community within the majority of their own ethnicity. This is a disaster for Acehnese vitality because this results in language shift among parents amid the dominant role and higher status of the Indonesian language formally and informally.

The dominant use of the Indonesian language in the non-formal domain has changed parents' attitude to be reluctant to speak their heritage language that results in the shrinking of the domain of Acehnese language in non-formal places in which the Indonesian language should not be used. The Acehnese parents have abandoned their heritage language as the valuable cultural identity that embodies to Acehnese parents by shifting to Bahasa Indonesia in a speech community. Parents are no longer proud to use Acehnese as their identity marker. This is a red alarm that Acehnese is expected to be extinct due to the negative attitude of its speakers as Ansori (2019) has pointed out to other local languages that have been extinct due to their speakers feeling embarrassed to speak their heritage languages.

CONCLUSIONS

The massive use of the Indonesian language today among Acehnese parents has resulted in a language shift among Acehnese parents to the Indonesian language in nonformal places. The negative attitude of parents who associate their heritage language as a language for old-fashioned and rustic people has caused the domain of Acehnese usage to keep shrinking. This becomes the crucial indicator that Acehense language starts losing its speakers. Furthermore, urgent actions are crucially needed from stakeholders, and language planning policy from Acehnese authority is urgently needed in order to raise the awareness among parents on the importance of their heritage language as their identity marker that reflects the cultural richness of Acehnese people by keeping speaking the language in the non-formal domain.

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