The Concept of Theme and Rheme in Children Code Switching

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Abstract

This paper is aimed to discuss about the concept of Theme and Rheme in relation with children code switching study case at Bale Lumbung Residence, district Labuapi. Theme and Rheme was firstly introduced by M.A.K Halliday in 1985. The reason why those terms are used in this study due to they are considered more appropriate in the present framework rather than Topic and Comment as what some grammarians used earlier. Considering Theme and Rheme as newer approach in analyzing a message, so those are relevant to measure the content of code switching. Data was taken ethnographically by recording and interviewing technique in this descriptive qualitative research. The collected data was analyzed by descriptive qualitative method through four steps, i,e. data reduction, data description, data grouping, and conclusion. The results of this study show that firstly, theme and rheme are found in children Sasak – Indonesian code switching. Secondly, code switching is used as communication strategy, to show their local identity, and to confirm that they are skilled in terms of use two languages within a communicative event.

Keywords: Theme and Rheme; Children; Code Switching

Introduction

This study is an investigation of playing two languages at the same speech event within the children of the Bale Lumbung Residence, district Labuapi, West Lombok, West Nusa Tenggara Province. As a newest residence in Labuapi, Bale Lumbung in which a number of languages coexist. This residence consists of about 80 families with different local language with Sasak as majority and followed by Samawa, Mbojo, Jawa, Bali, and smallest ethnic group is Asmat.

As multicultural ethnic and language, of course, Indonesian language is the most popular rather than local language, no exception within Sasak and Sasak family, for instance. However, as a new comer in West Lombok, the visitors understand what the meaning of some Sasak clauses such as *'ape jak kenen tie meton'*, *'brembe kabar miq'*, *'aro side jak'*, etc. The most incredible circumstance is that they can utter those clauses within the same speech event clearly.

Given the appropriate study, Barbara and Almeida (2009) assume in bilingual perspective; the speaker will exploit this ability and alternate between languages in an unchanged setting, often within the

same utterance; this phenomenon understood as code switching. Code switching as a language phenomenon does not merely stand on it positions as a "switcher", but it expresses a sorts of semantic organization. One of semantic organization that should be examined is that clause levels, where it is consisted of a group of words which forms a grammatical unit and which contain a subject and finite verb. (Richard, 1985 in Hanafi, 2013). In line with the definition, a clause functions as a noun clause, adjective or an adverb clause.

Continue to the instances of the clause above, all words that build up the clause will work together bring the message to the listener or receiver. It can be assumed that in all language the clause has the character of a message. One element in the clause is called *theme*; this then accompanied by *rheme*, which defines as a remainder of the theme to constitute a message (Halliday, 1991).

Following the terminology of theme and rheme, Code switching which contains a message structure, therefore consists of *theme* and followed by *rheme*. Consider the following example of children code switching which is contained by theme and rheme; *"Agha punya* 'teacher' *namanya* 'teacher' *Udin, Pak"*. The first sentence of the introduction *(Agha)* is functioned as a *theme* and *(punya teacher namanya teacher Udin, Pak)* as *rheme*. Consider another example: *"saya* 'tinjot' *Aldi letusin balon"*. The explanation is *"saya"* is called *theme*, and *"tinjot aldi letusin balon"* is mentioned as *rheme*.

For more details, consider the example: *"saya mau rambutan, beliin* maeh, *Mak"*. *Saya* is *theme* and *rheme* is *mau rambutan beliin maeh, Mak*. All the examples of the clause are referring to code switching which is contained by a group of words functioned as message. However, we cannot see what is actually going on inside a child's head, despite the fact bilingual research has been done in recent years of the ways in which children juxtapose two languages (Edith and Philip, 2003).

Based on the explanation above, this paper concern on first, what types of code switching do the children of Sasak-Sasak, Sasak-Samawa, Sasak-Mbojo, and Sasak-Jawa utilize? Secondly, is there any *theme* and *rheme* that mark common code switching when a child interacts to each other?

Methodology

Prior to the actual survey, first, the actual study involved face-to-face interaction or meet with chosen respondents. This strategy was employed to explore the practical use of code switching during the interaction with their friends. Secondly, interview session with their parents.

Result and findings

Overall, children confirmed that code switching was used to perform two words from two languages. Clearly, the result of this study is adopted from Edith and Philip (2003: 101) way to measure the linearity of children spoken. The results of the study are shown in the case study below:

Study 1: the family of Oyan

Oyan (7 years) is a youngest child of Rahman (originally Sasak) and Tuti (originally Java) couple. This couple has an eyeglass business in Cakranegara, Mataram business center. In their daily business, Oyan is always brought to that place after his school. In that place, most people use Sasak as a core language when they interact or transact goods and services to each other. Perhaps, because of his

environment linguistic phenomena, Oyan comes to Cakranegara in order to listen Sasak, not to learn and not to practice anymore, said his father. However, in my observation, he is a child who speaks Sasak fluently than his friends in Bale Lumbung Residence. Contrary to the fact, his father and mother do not speak Sasak to him. However, Sasak sometimes is used when he is playing with his friends. Here is linguistic design of *borrowing* that Oyan uses to his friends:

1) Hei.… *ndaq kadu sepedangke*, mau putus rantainya itu…
   Hei…. Jangan pakai sepeda saya, mau putus rantainya itu…
   The sentence can be translated:
   [Hey… don't use cycle my, will break chain its that]
   Correct English form:
   (Hey… don't use my cycle, its chain will be broken).
2) *Ape jaq tie?*
   Apa sih itu?
   What is that?
   Note: all structures used are the same.
3) *Ndeqk taoq. (*)*
   Tidak saya tahu.
   I don't know

(*) In English structure, subject comes to the first sentence and is followed by verb or object. On the contrary, in Sasak or even Indonesian language, we find auxiliary verb is placed in the first sentence and is followed by subject and main verb. However, this clause is acceptable for informal situation.

From the case study 1, at least we can draw figure (1) as shown below:

(Figure 1)
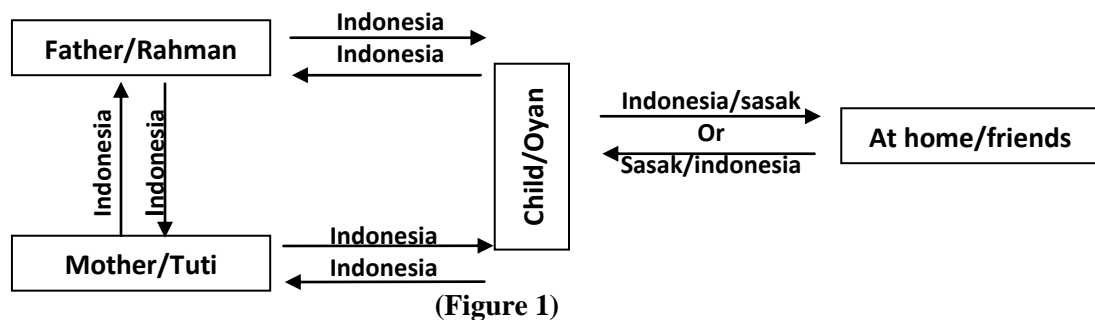
Study 2: the family of Azka

Azka (5 years, 10 months) is the first child of Yuniar Syamsu who comes from East Lombok and Refi who comes from Mataram. Both of them are civil servant in West Lombok. In his daily life, Yuniar always use Sasak not only to his colleagues in the office and but also to every person that are indicated Sasak people in his residence. While his wife, Refi, does not speak Sasak even for a little, but she understands what people say in Sasak. However, their first son, Azka becomes familiar with *language choice*, such as conversation below:

4)　Researcher　: kenapa Azka? (what happen Azka?)
　　Azka　　　: *tinjot* saya (kaget saya) (I'm shock). See clause 20 (*)
　　Researcher　: kenapa *tinjot*? (kenapa kaget?) (why are you sock?)
　　Azka　　　: itu, Aldi tiba-tiba letusin balon (suddenly, Aldi explode the balloon)

Figure (2) from Azka can be drawn as below:
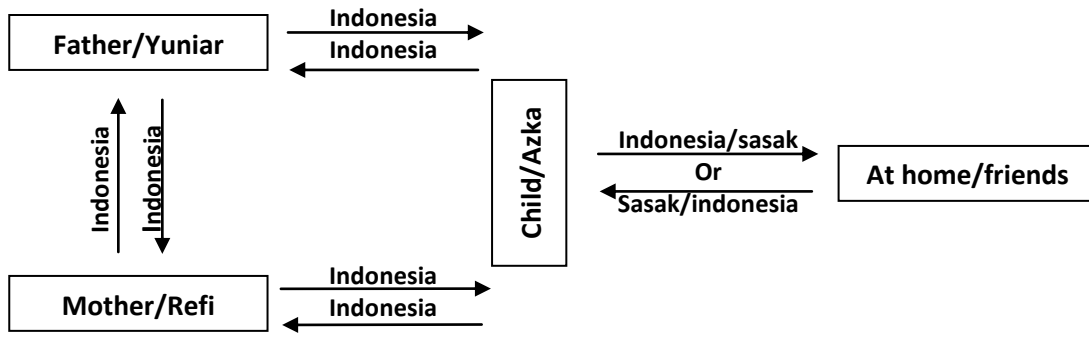
(Figure 2)

Study 3: the family of Agha

As we have discussed before, *triggering* is a word, which is similar in both languages, or the name of a person, place or commercial product, makes the speaker continue in the second language. The detail example by Agha (5 years, 2 months) says to his father:
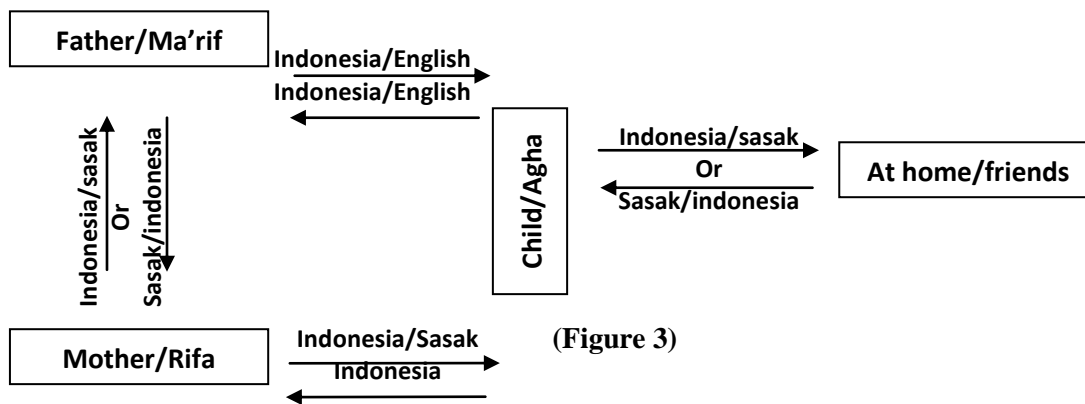
5)　　　　Agha　: Pak, itu *teacher*-nya Kakak (Pa, that is my teacher)
　　Father　: Ooo itu, siapa namanya? (Ooo that is yours, who is his name?)
　　Agha　　: teacher Udin

According to the explanation above, *'triggered'* switching is usually a mechanical accident rather than a deliberate expressive device, little more than a slip, as can be seen by the way speakers return to the right language very rapidly, without even completing the second-language part of the utterance. For more details, Agha used triggering in Sasak – Indonesia when I pick him up from his school. Consider the examples 23:

6)　Father: *Bapak pingin beli kerupuk, masih uang saku kakak?*
　　　　　 (Papa want to buy chips, do you still have money?
　　Agha: *Sudah habis, kan ada "kandoq" di rumah…*
　　　　　(it has gone, there has been side dishes in the hause).

If we talk about the case study 3, Agha is the first my son. In his daily routine, I accompany him to go to his kindergarten school. He asked me many words about something familiar for him. For examples:

7)　　　Agha: *apa bahasa inggrisnya kuda pak?* (Pa, what horse in English?)

8)　　　Agha : *kalau mobil pak, apa?* (Pa, how about car) etc.

Father/Ma'rif **Indonesia/English** →
← **Indonesia/English**

Indonesia/sasak Or Sasak/indonesia

Child/Agha **Indonesia/sasak Or Sasak/indonesia** → **At home/friends**

Mother/Rifa **Indonesia/Sasak Indonesia** → **(Figure 3)**

Conclusion

From the finding obtained through analysis of the data in this study, some conclusion can be drawn about the different terms of common code switching such as *borrowing, language choice*, and *triggering* in Bale Lumbung Residence. In short, children code switching is exclusive to bilinguals. Thus, there is no hesitation that code switching refers to the bilingual. Based on the data collected from the discussion above, this study concludes at least two conclusions. Firstly, common code switching such as *borrowing, language choice*, and *triggering* are underlying in the conversation among the children in Bale Lumbung Residence. Secondly, the message that they convey are interestingly parted of *theme* and *rheme*.

Associated with the conclusion of this study, the suggestions proposed as first Sasak language should be used by parents with the aim to observe it from the extinction. Secondly, Sasak language should be inserted and combined to the curriculum as an introduction in all levels of education in Lombok Island.

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