



Using Sasak Language: Am I too Old-Fashioned?

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Abstract

The language shift and maintenance are two phenomena which take place in tandem and inseparable. The language shift represents a cumulative result of language choice. This study will reveal several causes that make Sasak language start to be left aside by youth's generation and the related effects towards Sasak language as local wisdom of Sasak tribe. The study pries the primary concerned issue using ethnography study in order to reveal the perspective owned by the subjects. The data which are gained through this study comprise both linguistic and non-linguistic data. The data in the form of comments, perspectives, or shared paradigm are analyzed using match method. Furthermore, ones in the kind of dialogue are analyzed using communicative components. This study conclude that the domination of Indonesian language use tends to decrease the domain where Sasak language is commonly used. Such this situation foreshadows that diglossic situation has threatened.

Keywords: Language Shift; Language Maintenance; Sasak Llanguage; Endangered Language;

Introduction

Language refers to a communication tool and a part of culture as well. Wardaugh (1998: 215) defines culture as someone's understanding (know how) which is prevailing to daily social convention. In this case, the placement of language as a communication tool and a cultural reflection becomes a relevant foundation for the discourse of linguistic issues in Indonesia. The portrayal of ethnic varieties along with typical local language varieties represents Indonesia as a unique multicultural country.

In Indonesia, the overall citizens use both their own local language and national Indonesian language. The local language is used within the framework of familial communication and any communicative dimension having relatedness to the typically prevailing customs and culture. In the meantime, national Indonesian language is communicatively used for dealing with official affairs and any formal activities such as official meetings, governmental related speeches, seminars, and etc. Poedjosoedarmo (in Halim., 1983: 526) states that Indonesian societies are mostly bilingual language users. Within the circle of bilingual or multilingual language users, there will be encountered the effort made to preserve particular languages (generally local languages) by virtue of resisting the effect generated by the emergence of another language urgently utilized and regarded beneficial on the basis of economic perspective. It is in line with Fasold (1991: 213) who emphasizes that language maintenance is

a characteristic of bilingual and multilingual language users. What signifies the language shift can be exemplified when citizens are using a new language (in this case, Indonesian language) in the framework where the old language (local language) is commonly used for communication.

The term so-called bilingual language for particular language users who tend to preserve their local or mother language is necessary to be continuously echoed in the middle of globalized era which inclines to be opened with foreign language, so that the shift of local language can be minimalized. This worry looks reasonable if grounded to the growth of intensive contacts between an ethnic community and others. Such worry is also subsequently linked to the graphic advancement of Indonesian language use which massively grows to almost every society.

The shift of local language is in fact also undergone by several areas in Indonesia such as Papua, Maluku and Sulawesi. As reported by SIL International, local languages owned by Papua and Maluku are experiencing the process of extinction, and even some of them have totally been extinct. The same case also occurs in Sulawesi in that thousands of local language users experience critical condition related to language deterioration, and they are waiting for their languages to be left for the next generations as a legacy. Those languages are such as Pasundan, Talondo, and Napu language (Grimes in Kaswanti Purwo., 2002: 1–39). The same thing also happens to local language users in Palu, central Sulawesi. As conveyed by Basri (2008: 169–183) in a journal article, Kaili language being typical of the biggest ethnic, Kaili tribe in Palu, is suffering from the process of extinction in the circle of their young generation. It accounts for that nowadays this language is mostly not used in familial communication. As a consequence, this language is conceivably totally extinct within few further generations if constructive stages to activate this language use (revitalization) are not taken and applied in the familial circle of Kaili tribe.

In relation to the aforementioned phenomena, there will be a possibility that the same occurrence strikes Sasak language, one of local languages in Indonesia whose users' number is quite a lot ranging to $\leq 2,5$ million. This language is prevailing to be used Lombok, Nusa Tenggara Barat, with a variety of dialects typical of each village and district. Furthermore, it appears lately that the shift of Sasak language is starting to be indicated by the lack of youth's interest in learning and preserving this language. It is by virtue of today's perception assuming that this language is too old fashioned for nowadays use. In addition, the worry made by this language shift is also reasonable if viewed from the graphic increase of tourists and immigrants coming to this captivating city popularly renowned by halal tourism destination, Lombok, year after year.

Concerning with the phenomenon of language shift, Downes (1994: 195) postulates two causes triggering this to happen. They refer to related internal and external factors. The former can be viewed from the change of local language rules generated by psychological pressure and language acquisition in between one generation and others. Afterwards the latter refers to social factors comprising social class, age, gender, tribe, and particular spread. If probed into a virtual essence, language itself is fundamentally not shifting, but the users who become the subjects making Sasak language shift caused by their deeds. This shift can be yielded by the influence of language prestige factor, social economic, the reluctance to learn this language, and other probable causes. Such this view is in line with a statement from Croft (2004: 4) which remarks that language does not change, but people change language through actions.

In accordance with the above background, this study will reveal several causes that make Sasak language start to be left aside by youth's generation and the related effects towards Sasak language as local wisdom of Sasak tribe.

Literature Review

Language Shift and Language Maintenance

The language shift and maintenance are two phenomena which take place in tandem and inseparable. The language shift represents a cumulative result of language choice. Regarding language maintenance, the citizens simultaneously decide to keep utilizing the commonly used language. On the other hand, when particular language users decide to choose and use a new language especially in the framework of previously common local language, the commencement of local language shift is occurring.

Sumarsono (2001: 231-232) in his book entitled “Sosiolinguistik” gives an explanation related to the occurrence of language shift as the effect of action done by a group of people or a language user community who leave aside their mother language entirely, and who tend to decide to use a new language. In addition, Ammar (2004) also interprets the process of language shift as a historical event since by time the mother language owned by such language user community will totally be extinct. Such the view presented by Sumarsono and Ammar in this sense goes in tandem with one corroborated by Mbetse (2003: 14) who mentions that a language shift derives from the deterioration of its basic functions which generally incline to happen gradually across generations.

Furthermore, Mbetse (2003: 14-15) depicts that a language extinction can be identified from the deterioration or loss of a local language commonly used within familial communicative framework for instance daily communication between parents and children. Meanwhile, regarding language maintenance, Siregar et al. (1998: 88) interpret it as an action undertaken consciously by citizens to use their own local language to preserve that language from a threat of extinction made by another new language which is potential to replace their local language. The similar conception is proposed by Siregar, Sumarsono, dan Partana (2002) in that in an effort to maintain a local language, the citizens collectively determine to sustainably use their daily local language. The other remark going in tandem with the aforementioned conception about language maintenance is stated by Treudgill (2003: 75) in that language maintenance occurs when a community of language users continuously speaks using their original language, rather than shifting it to some other language. The term is used most frequently by linguistic minority communities since these are most likely to experience language shift”.

Based on the experts’ description above, there can be summarized that language maintenance is opposed to language shift. If language shift is caused by a decision made by a language user community to replace the old language with the new one, on the contrary, language maintenance is interpreted as a decision made by the language users to faithfully use their own local language.

It is a common sense to bilingual and multilingual society in the globalized era nowadays that one of the influential factors underlying the reluctance of youth generation to preserve their mother language is related to how they perceive the values of their mother language. Accordingly, it has been a sort of common phenomenon if there emerges a prevalent statement from youth generation telling that their local language has lost its prestige, and it is even perceived old fashioned to be used if compared to national Indonesian language so-called a foreign language in the context of local language issues. Such this perception brings about a language user community to likely use a new language and tends to leave the old one to be extinct. Fundamentally, this condition is big and serious homework which should be dealt with for the sake of identity preservation and the pride of every local area. A language gives a unique particularity to citizens or the language users. Thus a language shift will make the cultural symbol had by local language users fade away.

Previous studies conducted under the issues related to language maintenance and language shift had also ever been carried out by several researchers like Gall in 1978-1979 in Oberwart (in Fasold., 1991: 212-222). In his study, Gall revealed that the occurrence of language function shift in Oberwart was caused by social economic influence. The Oberwart citizens, who by nature were bilingual since they

used both German and Hungarian, began to leave aside the use of Hungarian so that this language function naturally became weaker, and that of German became stronger. That situation was influenced by the entry of Germany immigrants to Oberwart. Those immigrants at that time made Oberwart thrive on being an Industrial town.

Another relevant study to the language shift issue was undertaken by Dorian in 1981 in East Sutherland, a town in the North of Scotland. The citizens there were bilingual since they used both Gaelic and English language. Gaelic language had a long and very well recorded sequential history in East Sutherland. However, by time this language was regarded to have lower prestige. That this language was predominantly utilized in the majority of citizens then became minor in use. The primary cause of this language shift was political factors. As revealed by Gall and Dorian in their studies, the dominant role taken by immigrants made the existing local language shift.

The other study concerning with language maintenance had also been carried out by Fasold in 1991 towards Indian tribe, Tiwa in Mexico, via the use of questionnaire. Even though this tribe lived their lives under Spain and continuously the United State governance, this tribe still maintained their local language though the number of citizens was only two thousand people. This tribe could preserve their local language so that they managed to use Tiwa, Spanish language and English language. The latter two languages became their second languages. For language issue development, it was even their second languages which had a shift in that the role of English language increased, and that of Spanish language decreased otherwise. That English language use increased was by virtue of its flexibility in use, and this language was more beneficial in the context of social economy. They still maintained the use of Tiwa language as their ethnic identity, and they regarded this language beautiful.

In Indonesia, the study focusing its main issue on local language maintenance has not been undertaken in appropriate number. Sumarsono (1993) in his research report regarding "*Pemertahanan Bahasa Melayu Loloan di Bali*" revealed that at least there were several factors underlying the maintenance of Loloan language. They were: First, the settlement of Loloan language users was located on an area that was geographically separated from where Bali citizens mostly settled. Second, there was appreciable tolerance from the majority of Bali citizens towards using Melayu Loloan language when interacting to Loloan language users as the minor people although once a while the interaction was also carried out using Bali language. Third, the citizens, Loloan users, had a strong Islamic attitude which was not accommodating towards mostly Balinese people, culture, and language. Such this paradigm was also supported by the geographical separation generating minimal physical interaction between the minor Loloan citizens and the majority of Balinese people. Fourth, there was a high loyalty devoted by Loloan users towards Loloan language itself which brought a positive consequence to the status of this language, and which in fact also became an identical semiotic for Balinese people who are Hindu and the majority there. The last, fifth, there was built good sustainability for Melayu Loloan language from generation to generation.

The study undertaken by Sumarsono to Loloan people in Bali refers to an intrinsic conclusion regarding how a strong commitment is embodied within a language user community in support of local language maintenance. This condition however cannot be away from the advancement of globalized era and the intensity of foreign language which strikes in the middle of citizens' social life which is in fact potential to impede the stability of local language itself.

In accordance with a local language maintenance, especially Sasak language as the concern of this study, it is barely encountered any study focusing on the portrayal of Sasak language in today's globalized era. This situation triggers the researcher's interest to work on this realm.

Methodology

The study pries the primary concerned issue qualitatively since the researcher works on observing complex human's behavior (Sutopo., 2002: 10). A more specific term of this study design is so-called an ethnography study in order to reveal the perspectives owned by the subjects (Malinowski, in Amir Marzali 1997: xviii). Linguistic related data in the form of conversation are analyzed using ethnography communication as proposed by Hymes. On the one hand, it is also applied the concept of observer's paradox as suggested by Labov to probe into the prospective data as scientifically as possible.

The data which are gained through this study comprise both linguistic and non-linguistic data. The linguistic ones refer to both spoken and written Sasak language utilized by the users in Lombok. In the meantime, the non-linguistic ones refer to the comments, perspectives, or paradigm shared by Sasak language users. The source of this study data is concerned to utterances gained from any event of Sasak language use prevailing in the focused domain of this study.

The data analysis is conducted by classifying them on the basis of their domain. The data in the form of comments, perspectives, or shared paradigm are analyzed using match method (Sudaryanto., 1993: 27). Furthermore, ones in the kind of dialogue are analyzed using communicative components as proposed by Hymes: SPEAKING. This analysis is exerted to reveal the meanings or messages beyond the recorded speech.

Findings and Discussion

The following presents and discusses the portrayal of data related to Sasak language gained from this study conduction. The data orientation is centralized on the tendency and effects of using Indonesian language as a new one that replaces the old language.

As revealed by this study, the reluctance of using Sasak language spawned the deterioration in the aspect of its vocabularies and language rules to likely be less standardized. In daily communication, the deterioration of maintaining Sasak language vocabularies continued to occur. It is like the following instance which depicts the conversation found in a family living in Tembeng village, Wanasaba district, East Lombok.

Mother : [Pergi ke Santren sana, sebab dah tiga malam *an.te endéq* pergi ngaji. Nanti *te* marahi ma *amaq*]

(Come on go to Santren. It's been over three nights you're free from reciting Al-Qur'an. Your father's going to be mad at you then.)

Son [Ntar dulu, masih *lemaq*. Apalagi barusan *baturku* ngasih tau ndak ada ngajar ngaji malam *ine karne sik* ngajar jenguk *keluargane* ke Selong. *Jari bau* pelan-pelan]

(Please later on. It's still in the morning. My friend even told me at last that reciting Al-Qur'an was free for tonight because the teacher would be going to visit his family to Selong.)

Mother : [**Kalau gitu mandi dulu**, ntar *ante si* berebutan tipak kamar mandi *kan.ce* Ayu. Mandi sana! Ntar keburu malam]

(However, take a bath first! Then you're going to be scrambling with Ayu to use the

bathroom. Go on bath! The night's coming)

Son : [*Aoq* tunggu. ne masih keringetan]

Yes sure in a moment. I am pouring with sweat.

Father : [Kalau dah jam setengah nam, cepetan mandi. Walaupun *endéq araq deŋan* ngaji].

(If it's been at six, go for bath though the schedule of reciting Al-Qur'an is free.)

Son : *Aoq*

(Allright)

If analyzed using Hymes' perspective, SPEAKING, the above dialogue was a portrayal of a familial conversation had by those from Sasak tribe. Within the portrayal, the family members referred to a 49 year-old father whose profession was the head of senior high school, a mother whose occupation was an elementary school teacher, and the 12 year-old son who was the sixth grade student in elementary school. The setting (place and time) where the dialogue took place was in Tembeng Putik village. In detail, the participants were Mr. Marzuki, Mrs. Aminah, and Yan as their son. The researcher was a passive participant in this context. The purpose of the above dialogue was to inform the son to take a bath soon and go to Santren.

If viewed in detail, the dialogue indicated that the three Sasak users did not have appropriate competence of using this language. It could clearly be seen from how big the influence of Indonesian language was in the familial communicative framework which should have been the last shield of local language maintenance. If accounted in overall, the above dialogue had 76 words, and all of those words actually had their word representation in Sasak language except for the word **kamar**. Of the 76 words, there were only found 18 words which were incorporated into Sasak vocabularies, and the rest 58 words were Indonesian language. This distribution attested that the users' proficiency and competences in using Sasak language were low.

The deterioration of Sasak language use in the familial communicative framework as depicted above could mostly be identified from the deterioration of common daily Sasak vocabularies. Those such as "*la.lo*", "*sé.ngaq*", "*ba.réh*", "*si.li*", "*manjuran*", "*be.ruq*", "*ba.raq*", "*ajah*", "*ja.ngo*", "*se.me.ton*", "*se.re.pek*", and "*be.julu*" had not been echoed any longer within the communication. It was even more unfortunate that the son (Yan) had not been capable of using them, or perhaps as youth generation he did not know at all. As the replacement of meaning making the users inclined to change those words into "*pergi*", "*sebab*", "*Nanti*", "*marah*", "*apalagi*", "*barusan*", "*ngasih tau*" "*ngajar*", "*jenguk*", "*keluarga*", "*berebutan*", dan "*duluan*" rather than utilizing the aforementioned daily Sasak vocabularies.

Other data also showed how Indonesian language dominated and became more common to be used if compared to Sasak language.

- Mother : [*Sik laporang* Wahyu **sembunyiang** uang temannya siapa?]
(Who reported that Wahyu hid his friend's money?)
- Son : [Indra... *Ye laporang* saya]
(Indra... He reported me)
- Mother : [Dah ndak usah ma dia].
(Well, do not play with him anymore)
- Son : [Aoq]
: (Allright)
- Mother : [ndak usah bilang aoq, bilang iya]
: (don't say aoq, say "iya")

If viewed and analyzed in detail, the above data indicated the dominance of Indonesian language use which was intensively massive and flexible within the familial communicative framework. Actually, this framework should have been the potential educational field that the parents could exert to introduce and explicitly teach Sasak language to their son so that he could be accustomed to use it.

In the portrayed conversation, there could also be identified the use of some code switching through inserting informal Indonesian vocabularies such as "**laporang**" and "**sembunyiang**". Such the insertion of Indonesian vocabularies into Sasak words referred to the given consequence made of language contact. According to Thomson (2001: 10), the particular characteristic which was generally encountered in language contact was the insertion of borrowing words.

Regardless of the persistence of language contact, as a parent, the mother in the depicted dialogue had been failed to educate her son to use Sasak language appropriately. In fact, she even led her son to use informal Indonesian language like the short version of the word "tidak" to be "ndak". "sudah" to be "udah", and "sama" to be "ma". In addition, the word "laporang" and "sembunyiang" were a kind of code switching with modifying Indonesian roots which were then combined to the suffix from Sasak language "-ang). In relation to the above dialogue, there was also encountered that the mother even responded and fixed her son's language whose word was at first that of Sasak, and then changed into that of Indonesian language. It was like the utterance "*ndak usah bilang aoq, bilang iya*" where the translation could be "*don't say aoq, say "iya"*".

The Causes of Sasak Language Deterioration

Rather than the language contact effects, other related factors yielding the massive use of Indonesian language in the familial communicative framework were as follows:

First, the users' linguistic competence in using Sasak language was inappropriate. This point could be seen from the users' inability to mostly find and use appropriate Sasak vocabularies, for example when one of them articulated "**keluargane**" or "**sembunyiang**" if that user had adequate competence to properly use Sasak language, he would be more selective and would not force to change or modify Indonesian vocabulary into that of Sasak. In Sasak language, the word "**keluargane**" and "**sembunyiang**" should be replaced by "**semetonne**" and '**se.boan**'.

Second, there could be seen a habituation led by parents to make their son use Indonesian language in the familial communicative framework, rather than to use Sasak language, so that the son himself felt free to leave Sasak language aside in the familial context. It was in line with the son's

statement (data 1), 12-year-old son engaged in the first given dialogue, in which he said: “*I can actually use Sasak language a bit but I don’t have enough vocabularies. My parents have also been habituated to use Indonesian language at home*”. This statement was taken under the purpose of applying ethnography method which probed into the perspective owned by the society or research informant in this sense. That statement indicated that the parents let a habituation be for their son to use Indonesian language even in familial conversations.

Third, the users’ social economic factor also became the effect. Like in the second given dialogue, the user was a young mother who was educating her son. Socially the parent expected her son to be a successful person in his career so that he could be successful economically. In other words, there could be seen an implication that Sasak language was not regarded promising and influential for being economically successful, and Indonesian language was regarded more prestigious to use instead of Sasak language. The aforementioned three points became the primary factors which led to the occurrence of language shift for Sasak language.

The domination of Indonesian language use in the familial communicative framework, one which should have been the last shield for the sake of Sasak language maintenance, definitely gives big effects to the shift of Sasak language itself. The most fatal thing is that Sasak language could be gradually extinct made by the users who tend to leave it aside for daily use. It is in line with Javier Perez de Cuellar, et al. (1996: 181) who mention “For linguist, an ‘endangered’ language is one which is not learned anymore by children or at least by a good part of the children of the community concerned”.

Conclusion and Implication

The citizens who belong to Sasak tribe are bilingual. In daily communication, they use both Sasak and Indonesian language. The domination of Indonesian language use which is very intense since it is a national language tends to decrease the domain where Sasak language is commonly used. Especially it can be seen in the domain of familial conversation where there has been occurring a shift from the use of Sasak language to that of Indonesian language. Such this situation foreshadows that diglossic situation has threatened. Fasold (1991: 52) calls this by *leakage* (functional deterioration). The influence of globalized era also leads the mindset of Sasak language users from that which is in the beginning spawns character building, cultural empowerment, to that which goes to produce humans who are prospectively successful in economy.

Basically, there is nothing wrong with the choice of Indonesian language use since the ability of using Indonesian language is an inevitability which is really required in the middle of globalized era like nowadays. However, the danger will arise if the use of Indonesian language has penetrated the communicative dimension where Sasak language is usually used. It is like the familial communicative framework. It is even the last shield for Sasak language maintenance. Sasak language is a cultural asset owned by Sasak tribe in Lombok which should have been kept sustainable. When the users use this language, it is the proof of faith to their tribe and the place where they were born, and not like otherwise condition which regards Sasak language old fashioned.

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