



Language Shift and Vitality of Paku Language in East Barito

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Abstract

Paku language gets shifted in connection to fading its language vitality away. The decreasing number of native speakers of Paku language has probably resulted from language contact with other surrounding languages. As a consequence, the natives gradually become bilingual, even multilingual. Some dominant languages around the speech area of Paku language include Dayak Maanyan, Banjar, and Indonesian languages. Regarding economic factors, the natives interact with others who use other languages. Hence, the Paku tribe shifts to use Dayak Maanyan language for daily interaction since Dayak Maanyan language is categorized as the *lingua franca* along the Barito River. Both Paku and Dayak Maanyan languages are lexically similar. Besides, Dayak Maanyan and Paku languages are included as a language family. As a result, the natives of Paku language have no difficulties to become bilinguals by speaking both Paku and Dayak Maanyan languages. Unfortunately, this tends to make the natives uninterested in using the Paku language. These are also considered as an initial step of the current loss of Paku language vitality in East Barito regency. This study focuses on language shift in terms of its usage and language vitality level of Paku language. It deployed a descriptive method. The data were obtained from informants in the speech event happening in some domains of language use in Bantai Napu subdistrict. The data were then analyzed by some steps, that are (1) classifying Paku language used concerning its domain, (2) identifying language shifts on Paku language usage, (3) measuring Paku language vitality level with using UNESCO and EGIDS scales, and (4) concluding.

Keywords: *Language Shift; Language Vitality; Paku Language*

Introduction

Paku language (PL) is spoken by the Paku tribe, one of the Dayak tribes in Central Kalimantan. They live along Tampa, Bantai Napu, Kalamus, and Paku Beto subdistricts, Paku district, East Barito Regency, Central Kalimantan province. According to Simons & Fennig (2017), the speech area of PL was located in the southern part of Ampah, East Barito regency. In 1987, Santoso et al. (1989) claimed that PL speakers were about four thousand. In 2002, Iper et al. recorded that the number of PL speakers decreased by approximately five hundred. In 2003, as suggested by Eberhard et al. (2019) and Soriente & Inagaki (2012), PL speakers were about three thousand and five hundred. In 2013, Sumadi et al. (2015), in their

study on a language family, stated that PL speakers were about three hundred left and only lived in the Bantai Napu subdistrict. In April 2019, the last investigation on the PL speech area indicated that people who admitted being able to speak PL were only fifteen in Bantai Napu subdistrict. This significant amount of decreasing PL speakers occurs within thirty years. The loss of this amount of PL speakers is due to language contact. The natives gradually speak two languages, even more. There are some languages dominantly used in the PL speech area, including Dayak Maanyan, Banjar, and Indonesian languages. As the economic factor cannot be avoided, PL speakers interact with other language speakers. Moreover, most of them change their preference to use Dayak Maanyan for daily interaction because Dayak Maanyan language is considered as *lingua franca* along the Barito River. It is in line with Wardhaugh & Fuller (2015: 83), who argued that if there is a language socially dominating a speech area, language shift probably occurs, in which speakers change to use the dominant language.

Regarding lexical similarity, PL is 77% similar to the Dayak Maanyan language (Eberhard et al. 2019). Besides, Dayak Maanyan and Paku languages are considered as language family (Iper et al., 2002; Sumadi et al., 2015). As a consequence, PL speakers do not find any difficulties in speaking Dayak Maanyan and becoming bilingual. This situation stimulates PL speakers gradually not to use PL. It then becomes the initial step of the loss of PL vitality in East Barito Regency, Central Kalimantan.

Similarly, Harrison (2007:3) stated that the last speakers of probably half of the world's languages are alive today. He added that as they grow old and die, their voices will fall silent, and their children and grandchildren—by an overwhelming majority—will either choose not to learn or will be deprived of the opportunity to learn the ancestral language. This phenomenon also occurs in PL, in which today's PL speakers are only fifteen people left and have been old. Meanwhile, young generations prefer to use a more dominant language. This situation brings PL to lose its language vitality.

As an initial step to see the language shift of PL, leading to losing its language vitality, some problems are discussed in this study. Including (1) how language shift happens on Paku language in terms of language use and (2) how the current language vitality level of Paku language is. The main objectives are to measure the language vitality level of PL and to explain the language shift of PL. Language shift refers to that a community completely leaves a language to use another language and collectively chooses a new language (Sumarsono, 2009: 231). It also refers to a process of changing one language into another in a community (Holmes, 2013: 72).

Meanwhile, the term of vitality deals with the ability to survive (Badan Pengembangan dan Pembinaan Bahasa, 2016). In connection to language, language vitality indicates the ability of a language to survive. The language vitality level of a language can be measured; the higher language vitality level of a speech community, the higher their potential to survive, and vice versa.

There are some factors affecting language vitality. They are:

- (1) intergenerational language transmission,
 - (2) government and institutional language attitudes and policies, including official status and use,
 - (3) the absolute number of speakers,
 - (4) the proportion of speakers within the total population,
 - (5) trends in existing language domains,
 - (6) community members' attitudes towards their language,
 - (7) response to new domains and media, and
 - (8) materials for language education and literacy
- (UNESCO cited in Musgrave 2016: 389).

These factors are essential in measuring language vitality level of a language as well as to describe the situation of language shift.

This study is expected to give two benefits. Theoretically, it can explain what truly happens to indigenous language with a few amount speakers in the rural area of Kalimantan and to describe the direction of language shift of PL into a near loss of its language vitality. It also gives a theoretical contribution to linguistics, particularly sociolinguistics, in terms of language shift and endangered languages. Practically, it enriches the treasures of national languages and cultures and becomes an effort to preserve indigenous languages as national assets. Besides, it gives inputs to the East Barito Regency Government to create a policy related to indigenous languages in their area.

Methodology

This study used the descriptive method. It aimed to make a description, imagination, or illustration systematically about language shift and language vitality level. It was conducted in the Bantai Napu subdistrict, Paku district, East Barito Regency, Central Kalimantan province. It was related to PL usage in Bantai Napu subdistrict as the PL speech community left.

Source of data referred to where the data were obtained, it was reflected by places, informants, events, documents, and sites (Santosa, 2017: 52). This study collected the data from informants in the speech event occurring in some domains in Bantai Napu subdistrict. The data were then analyzed into some steps, including (1) to classify PL usage concerning domains; (2) to identify language shift on PL usage; (3) to measure the level of language vitality of PL by using UNESCO and EGIDS scale; (4) to conclude the results.

Analysis

Analysis of language shift and vitality in PL are divided into two-part. First, describing the language shift of PL in terms of domains, and, second, measuring the level of language vitality of PL.

Language Shift of Paku Language

The language shift in Paku language occurs in connection to language use domain, including family, friendship, religion, and education.

1. Family Domain

In the family domain, the study observes two families in the Bantai Napu subdistrict. One family has grandparents, indicating that there are three generations in that home, and another family only contains a nuclear family, including father, mother, and children, about ten years old.

Based on the observation, the study finds that only the family with a grandparent at the age of 65 that know PL. Its parents and children understand that the grandparent can use PL, but they have no interest in learning it. The interaction between a grandparent with parents and children has no longer used PL, but Dayak Maanyan language. However, the grandfather, who admits being able to use PL, said that he rarely uses PL because there is no “enemy” to interact since his wife died. He uses PL if only he meets his friends in that village, and it is infrequent because they are all old and rarely go outside. They have no

intention not to teach PL to their children. However, their children prefer to use the Dayak Maanyan language because the interaction outside the home and the community uses that language.

Additionally, in the nuclear family, children do not know PL. Meanwhile, parents admit knowing that their tribe has PL, and now the speakers are rarely found. Henceforth, the Paku tribe in the Bantai Napu subdistrict has no longer used PL to interact with their family.

2. Friendship Domain

In the friendship domain, the researcher purposely arranged a meeting between two friends who are 65 years old. It indicates that both of them use PL in the interaction. They said that if they meet friends of the same age, they use PL because of only all of them who can use PL. They claimed that they have the willingness to preserve PL. However, young generations have no interest in using it. In conclusion, the Paku tribe in Bantai Napu subdistrict, still use PL in the interaction between friends with the same age of 65 or more.

3. Religion Domain

In the religion domain, the researcher participates two kinds of Christian worships, including the worship conducted in the Christian church and another worship performed in a family. To worship in the church, the priest uses the Indonesian language and, sometimes, mixes it with Dayak Maanyan language in delivering the sermon and interacting with the congregation. To worship in the family, the priest uses more Dayak Maanyan language. Hence, the Paku tribe has no longer used PL in the religious domain. According to the chief of the Paku tribe, religious activities related to the tribal religion (Kaharingan religion) have never been conducted because no Paku tribe still believes in Kaharingan. Besides, in the traditional wedding ceremony, the tradition frequently used is the Dayak Maanyan wedding tradition because no Paku tribe can carry out Paku tradition and ritual.

4. Education Domain

In the education domain, the researcher observes the only school in the Bantai Napu subdistrict, which is SD Negeri Bantai Napu. It indicates that teachers use the Indonesian language for classroom interaction. However, for indigenous language subjects, teachers teach Dayak Ngaju language because the learning material provided by the Office of Education and Culture is only Dayak Ngaju language material. However, that language is not used in that area. Henceforth, PL has been no longer used in the education domain.

Based on the observation on language use in four domains in the PL speech event, there is a language shift from PL to Dayak Maanyan language. Young generations in that area have no longer use PL, but Dayak Maanyan language.

Language Vitality of Paku Language

Two measurement scales consider the language vitality of the Paku language. Including nine factors adapted by Musgrave (2016: 389) from UNESCO scale on vitality language and language death and scale model with thirteen levels proposed by Lewis and Simons (2009), which is then improved and

published through Ethnologue site (Eberhard, et al., 2019b), and named as EGIDS (Expanded Graded Intergenerational Disruption Scale).

The language vitality level of PL from nine factors of language death suggested by UNESCO in Musgrave (2016: 389) is the following.

(1) *Intergenerational Language Transmission*

The language inheritance factor among generations is the most important thing that determines how far language mastery of children in the community is. These indicate that language without young speakers is considered in a critical state. Based on this factor, the language vitality of PL is **critically endangered**. Based on the observation, in the PL speech area, Bantai Napu subdistrict, PL is now only spoken by people at the age of 65 or more. It is not inherited to young generations. There are no children in that subdistrict who can use PL.

(2) *The Absolute Number of Speakers*

A community with a small number of speakers can be categorized as "critical" because a small population of speakers is more vulnerable to lose the language. These probably happen due to diseases, war, or natural disasters. Language and culture death of a small speech community probably happen because they join a more prominent speech community. In the PL speech area, the Bantai Napu subdistrict, PL speech community, joins to the more significant community, which is the Dayak Maanyan speech community. The number of PL speakers is only about 15, with the range of ages between 65 – 80 years old. Therefore, the absolute number of PL speaker is categorized as **critically endangered**.

(3) *The Proportion of Speakers within the Total Population*

This factor is reflected by speaker proportion in a community. The number of speakers in the relation of the number of community members is also an important indicator in language vitality. The speech area of PL is located in Bantai Napu subdistrict. This subdistrict has a total population of as much as 644 people. However, there are only 15 amongst 644 people who are still able to use PL in the Paku tribe. Considering the extent of language death, PL is categorized as a **critically endangered** language since there is a small number of people in this subdistrict who use PL for communication.

(4) *Trends in Existing Language Domains*

Until now, PL is only used in the friendship domain, between friends of the same age (65-80 years old) who can use PL, in daily interaction. One realization of language preservation is to use it in religion and tradition domains. Unfortunately, the Paku tribe has no longer used PL in these domains since they use the Dayak Maanyan language. It also happens in other domains. Based on the scale of language vitality level in terms of this factor, PL is categorized as a language with limited usage and **critically endangered**.

(5) *Response to New Domains and Media*

This factor views how the Paku tribe develop their language in new domains. The study finds that the Paku tribe cannot use their language in new domains and media. They change to use another language

that is considered more dominant, prestige, and beneficial, that is Dayak Maanyan language. Based on this factor, PL is categorized as **inactive** or **extinct** language.

(6) *Materials for Language Education and Literacy*

This factor views the phase of PL development, including literacy level. The questions are "Is there any Paku tribe orthography?", "Is there any community member who agree on a general standard to write Paku language?", "Is there available teaching process and learning material for Paku language?" or "Is there any kind of literature, such as newspaper, stories, religious texts published in Paku language?" The answers are "no". Based on the factor of learning material availability (material for language education and literacy), PL is at 0 levels or **endangered**, and there is no orthography available for the community.

(7) *Government and Institutional Language Attitudes and Policies, including Official Status and Use*

This factor is related to government policy on language, including language institution attitude and policy as well as legitimate status and language use. The government and language institutions have explicit and implicit policies on dominant and minor languages. They treat all languages, both dominant and minor, similarly with the same rights to be protected and preserved.

(8) *Community Members' Attitudes towards Their Language*

This factor is in connection with community members' attitudes toward their community language. Community members are usually biased toward their language. They probably considered their language as an essential thing for the community and their identities, so they use it. Conversely, they possibly feel embarrassed about their language, so they do not use it. When their attitude toward their language is positive, the language will be viewed as the main symbol of tribal identity. However, when they see language as an obstacle for economic mobility and integration into everyday society, they probably have negative attitudes toward their language. Based on the observation, it indicates that the Paku tribe shows negative attitudes toward their language. Young generations of Paku tribe tend to be embarrassed to use PL because it is considered funny to be spoken. To mobilize the economy, they shift to use Dayak Maanyan and Banjar languages, as dominant languages used by traders in that area. In the interaction with everyday society, the Paku tribe change to use Dayak Maanyan and Indonesian languages. Thus, regarding community members' attitudes toward their language, language vitality of PL gets 0 score or **endangered**. No one cares if this language loses; all prefer to use the dominant language.

(9) *Type and Quality of Document*

This factor is concerning the effort to evaluate the urgency of documentation by focusing on data quantity and quality of existed language and analyze it. Consequently, the aspect of text documentation in terms of transcriptions, translations, audiovisual recordings of original utterances is essential. The information on these documents is necessary to design a research project together with community members of that language. Concerning documentation quality, PL is considered as an **inadequate** category. There are some outlines about grammar, brief-word lists, and separated texts. Meanwhile, audio and video recordings are not available. Thus, PL is categorized as a critically endangered language.

Based on the level of language vitality in terms of the EGIDS scale, this study uses five key questions to guide the diagnose on the evaluation process of Paku language. Those questions are provided in the following, supplemented with language users' responses.

1) What is the function of the Paku language now?

Now, PL has no function as a means of communication in its speech community. It is only used on the friendship domains between elders.

On which level Paku language is used in formal domains?

PL has no longer used in formal domains.

2) Do all parents transmit Paku language to their children?

Now, parents in the Paku tribe have no longer transmitted PL to their children.

The third key question is given when the answer to the first key question is to function as a means of communication at home. However, the answer is *no*. As a consequence, the fifth key point has to be answered to determine the level of language vitality on the level of EGIDS 6B, 7, and 8a.

3) How is literacy status?

Now, PL only has some outlines of grammar, brief-word lists, and separated texts.

4) Which is the youngest generation who is a fluent speaker?

They are 65 – 80 years old generation, in the level of grandparents and great grandparents.

From five key questions above concerning the EGIDS scale, PL is on the 8b level, with *a nearly extinct* label in which the speakers left only a group of grandparents. However, they have a few opportunities to use that language. If this label is equaled to the UNESCO scale, PL is in the **critically endangered** category.

8b	<i>Nearly Extinct</i>	<i>The only remaining speakers of the language are members of the grandparent generation or older who have little opportunity to use the language.</i>	<i>Critically Endangered</i>	1
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Conclusion

All domains of language use observed reflect the language shift of PL in the Bantai Napu subdistrict, Paku district, East Barito Regency, Central Kalimantan. Language shift is started because there is language contact with other speakers who use the more dominant language in that area, which is Dayak Maanyan language. The lack of language loyalty and pride to keep maintaining and preserving language as a tribal identity also contributes to language shift.

Young generations of Paku tribe prefer to use Dayak Maanyan language, the more dominant language along the Barito River. The phenomenon of language shift probably happens on not only PL but also other minor languages along this river, resulted from the domination of mayor language that becomes a *lingua franca*.

Concerning language vitality measurement with using EGIDS and UNESCO scales, PL is now categorized as a nearly extinct and critically endangered language. If we let it be, in ten years, PL will be extinct and only written in research reports conducted by researchers or government institutions.

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