

Language Choice Used by Chinese Family in Langsa

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Abstract

The research aims at identifying the language choice used by Chinese family in Langsa, the phenomenon that has long been seen in Chinese families: having tendency to choose Indonesian as the second language in their families even though they live in the Aceh region. This phenomenon is not only seen in the town but also in urban areas. The emergence of language selection is caused by the occurrence of language, social condition, and cultural tradition. The interesting thing to look at and study in connection with this phenomenon is that members in the family are from the Chinese ethnic group and speakers of native Chinese but the language used to communicate with the community in the chosen environment is Indonesian. The focus of this research is to analyze language selection Indonesia in a Chinese family in Langsa. The research is executed by means of descriptive qualitative method supported by the technique of interview to get deep information about the language choice.

Keywords: language choice, communication, interaction.

1. Introduction

Language is an important factor in human communication. The ability to use the language well is a sign of good interaction because the message in question will be forwarded and understood well. However, when someone allows a language to diminish, a person automatically loses a certain part of one's culture, prestige, and integrity. The choice of language in communicating is an important thing that must be considered by the speaker. The idea or desire of the speaker is sometimes accepted based on the choice of language. In traditional markets communication tools used are usually regional languages; the local language or the regional language of the trader. This will have an impact, both psychologically and economically on whether or not the buyer wishes. In every region in Indonesia there is a regional language used by the community as a means of communication and interaction within the group. Generally regional language is the first language by the community members in the area concerned. Therefore, it can be ascertained that every member of the community who lives in an area understands and is able to use the local language. However, this is not the case with the reality currently seen in Chinese community. In general, the second language chosen in Chinese families is Indonesian.

The phenomenon that has long been seen in Chinese families is the tendency to choose Indonesian as the second language in their families even though they live in the Aceh region. This phenomenon, particularly evident in urban areas and in recent times has also begun to be seen in rural areas (Alamsyah, 2007). The interesting thing to look at and study in connection with this phenomenon is that members in the family are Chinese ethnic and

speakers of Chinese native. But the language used to communicate with the community in the chosen environment is Indonesian. The focus of this research is to analyze language selection in a Chinese family in Langsa.

The research focuses on language choice used by Chinese family in Langsa, supported by means of interviews and conducted by applying descriptive qualitative method.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Contact Language

According to Thomson (2001) language contact is the use of several languages in the same place and at the same time, and this use will lead to language changes in the sense that one language can affect other languages. Once a new language is learned, it becomes available as part of the speaker. The language chosen depends on several factors that determine the choice of a particular language or use, such as topics, social scenes, relative speaker status, aspirations and feelings of their identity.

The concept of domain was introduced by Fishman (1991). Fishman suggests that this domain could be a useful as theoretical tool for analyzing the attitudes and behaviour of minority speakers on language. They also determine the choice of speakers and the use of language. Domain is an interactional situation where the use of a particular language is considered appropriate. This domain can be family, friendship, education, work, etc.

Brody (2008) reviewed that Winford has tested various types of language contact. He argues that different results come from different social situations; which means that language contact can be understood by considering the language domain used in talking.

Wesche (1994) shows that when two languages are interconnected the idea of bilingualism appears to cause problems such as language interference and bilingual individuals. He believes that language changes are influenced by extra-linguistic factors such as geography, indigenous groups, culture and ethnicity, religion, race, gender, age, social status, and rural vs population and urban.

2.2 Language Selection in a Multilingual Community

Although most of the world's population can only speak one language, a large number can communicate in two or more languages. Every time the speaker 'of two or more languages is united, a decision must be made about which language to use. It must be clear that many factors influence the choice of language, and can function properly with or against one another, resulting in a complicated interaction network making the task of describing any language selection program very difficult.

According to Giles (1987), the analysis of language selection in multilingual settings remains an important effort in sociolinguistic research. Early attempts by linguists and sociologists in describing the use of language in general quantitative terms have failed to explain the evidence for inter-community heterogeneity, individuals and opportunities. Theoretically, subtle tools are needed to explain why X languages are used in situation X, and why Y is used in situation Y.

Contrary to the widely held belief that language use is not systematic, sociolinguistics has been held as an axiom that "the choice of speaker between varieties is also arranged. It is systematically related to social relations, events or situations." Therefore, one of the fundamental problems in the social oriented linguistic discipline is why certain languages are chosen for use in certain situations, while other varieties are preferred in other

circumstances that Fishman (1964) has stated in his book widely cited in the title, 'Who speaks what language to who and when.

Language choice is the choice of words, phrases, clauses or other language sentences in the speaker's linguistic repertoire. For bilingual and multilingual, the emergence of language choices seems natural, automatic and unplanned. The speaker chooses the appropriate list, genre, style, media, or tone of voice in relation to the interlocutor (who), topic (what), context (where) and media (how) in each conversation. Bentahila (1983) states that language choice may be influenced by factors related to individual speakers, certain languages and their associations, or aspects of the social situation. It seems that certain choices can be influenced by a number of variables, perhaps from different weights.

Fasold (1990) argues that multilingualism serves as an interactional source for multilingual speakers. This means that one particular language can usually be used at home or with close friends, while other languages can be used for trade and trade, and even a third for dealing with government agencies.

Every speaker of any language has a variety of languages; Gumperz (1964) uses the term 'linguistic repertoire' to describe the various styles that an individual need to fulfil all or his communication needs in the most appropriate way. The ability of the speaker to choose varieties that are suitable for a particular purpose is part of his communication competence; the choice is not random, but it has been shown to be determined by aspects of social organization of the community and the social situation in which the discourse took place. In case bilingual or multilingual is not different from one language; it is just that a speaker must choose not only between different varieties of the same language, but also between two or more different languages.

David (2006) argues that language choice is triggered by such factors as social status, gender, educational attainment, ethnicity, age, occupation, rural and urban origin, speaker, topic, place, media and situation formality. This finding is supported by Fasold (1990), Spolsky (2004) and Mugambi (2003).

Coulmas (1997) explains that people make linguistic choices for various purposes. Individuals and groups choose words, registers, styles and languages to fulfil their various needs about communication of ideas, associations with and separation from others, domination or defence of domination. People are blessed with the ability to adapt their linguistic repertoire to new situations and build their language for a specific purpose.

Ferrer and Sankoff (2004) find that the language preference of a speaker is influenced by the dominant language because it is mostly bilingual and multilingual that can choose the dominant language as a communication medium as it gives them greater benefits, economic benefits, expansion of social networks and better opportunities. The choice of dominant language can be triggered by wider acceptance and function of the language. Dominant language affects the language of the choice of the speaker. More prestigious languages are usually preferred as communication media in various domains because of their wider social functions. Pillai (2006) shares the same perspective; Dominant languages can be used in the domain of formal and informal communication and help gain prestige, better economic access in society, authority and power.

Managan (2004) also believes that the choice of dominant language provides people with prestige and the opportunity to socialize more with others which leads to the possibility of expanding social networks and getting more economic success. Once someone becomes a member of a particular language group, this group becomes a social network and develops a sense of identity that can be revealed through language choices and ways of speaking.

2.3 Language Choice

Language choice is "a language as a whole" in a communication. The emergence of language selection is caused by the occurrence of language, social, and cultural contact so that a growing group of speech communities who have the ability to choose language or language code in a particular event, either maintaining the first language or shifting language to a new language or mixing first language and new language.

In other words, someone who chooses the language in his communication is actually applying his communicative competence or is showing his communicative performance. As a behaviour, the choice of language is essentially an action or behaviour in using selected language based on the available situation. However, for this study, the term 'language selection' is used practically to refer to communicative performance or language behaviour (language behaviour) even though language behaviour contains a broader range of understanding. In this case, Blom & Gumperz proposes two types of code choices:

- a. Situational switching (situational switching) Situational transition is used to refer to language selection that depends on various aspects of the situation, including the degree of formality. As predicted, when the linguistic situation is formal and relatively free from personal problems, the variety of standard languages is chosen, while local varieties are chosen when the situation is informal.
- b. Metaphorical switching. Metaphoric transition is used to explain the choice of language determined by the participants' relationships.

In a multiethnic and multilingual society, no one should only have one language code in the repertoire. What often happens, even, is that people will always be involved in inter-language contact or between dialects. To build social interaction to be quite smooth, people will try to apply social integration skills with the community groups where they live. The level of social (and psychological) integration of a person is assumed to be sufficient to determine the speed at which he conducts social accommodation, including language accommodation. Assumptions are based on the reality that one's willingness in association will determine much of the speed with which it is received by the interlocutor.

2.4 Language Selection Category

According to the language of Fasold (1984: 180) it is not as simple as we imagine, which is to choose "a language as a whole" (all languages) in communication. We can find people who have two or more languages.

For example, someone who carries the language of Aceh and Indonesian must choose one of the two languages when speaking to other people in communication events. In fact, in terms of choosing, there are three types of choices.

1. Choosing one variation of the same language (intra language variation), if an Aceh speaker speaks to the village head using Aceh language, for example, then he has chosen the first language.
2. Code switching, meaning using one language at a time, and using another language for other purposes.
3. Code mixing, meaning using one particular language by interfering with pieces from other languages. More will choose the language to be used

Before that, Giles identified three patterns of language usage:

1. the use of ethnic minority languages;
2. bilingual in dominant ethnic and language languages;
3. monolingual in dominant language.

Referring to Giles, it can be argued that a member of society is likely to apply the following language choices:

1. using local language / first (divergent)
2. using regional / first language and Indonesian (converging);
3. using Indonesian (convergent). This pattern of language selection is predicted to be found in research.

2.5 Determinants of Language Selection

Thomason (2001) identified four main factors that led to language selection, including:

1. Situations and settings, such as time and place;
2. Participants in interactions, such as: age, gender, occupation, socioeconomic status, origin, ethnic background, and their role in relations with other participants;
3. Conversation topics, can be in the form of topics regarding work, or actual events;
4. Interaction function which is a function of conversation in interaction.

From the explanation of the various factors above, what needs to be considered is that there is no single factor that can influence the choice of someone's language. The question is whether these factors have equal importance. Language selection research studies that have been carried out show that a factor occupies a position that is more important than other factors. Giles (1982) found evidence that the characteristics of speakers and speech partners were the most decisive factors in the choice of language in the community, while the topic and background factors were the less decisive factors in language selection than the participant factors.

Unlike Giles, Thomason (2001) found the most important determinant was the location where the speech event took place. In his research on the selection of Guarani and Spanish languages in Paraguay Rubin concluded that the location of interaction is:

1. Village
2. School
3. Public places determine the choice of community language.

In the village the speaker will choose the *Guarani* language, at school Spanish, and in public places, Spanish.

2.6 Language Choice used By Chinese Family in Langsa

In general language functions as a communication tool. One individual relationship and another individual cannot be separated from language as a communication tool. On that basis, language lives and develops with all its functions (Sudaryanto, 1993). Chinese people who live in Langsa learn the language of Aceh as a tool to communicate considering the local environment uses the language of Aceh. Another question in the interactive dialogue which is also quite interesting is, "Why do Chinese people, mothers, (sometimes also fathers) especially when shopping at the market tend to interact with the language of Aceh even though it can be ascertained that he does not know the market traders come from Aceh

ethnic or not. Likewise, traders will greet visitors in the language of Aceh even though he knows for certain that these visitors are Chinese, ethnic speakers of Chinese. Such reality indeed deserves serious attention by language and cultural observers. This condition is also related to attitude. Managan (2004) says that attitude is a person's readiness to react to a situation or event faced. This readiness can refer to mentality or to a "behaviour" attitude. In addition, Managan (2004) says that attitude is mental and neural readiness that is formed through experience that provides a dynamic direction or influence on a person's reaction to all objects or circumstances that concern that attitude.

3. Research Method

This research was conducted in Blang Passeh Jln. Iskandar Muda Langsa Kota and the number of respondents we interviewed was 15 families. The subjects of this study were families who came from native Chinese descent.

This study took a sample of Chinese families in Blang Passeh in North Sumatra. The sample was 15 families. Arikunto (2005) says that the sample is part of the population (partially or representative of the population under study). The sample is part of the population that is taken as a data source and can represent the entire population.

Based on the description above, the researcher decided to use sample collection techniques by non-probability sampling. Non-probability sampling techniques according to Putrawan (1990) do not provide opportunities for each member of the population to be used as research samples. According to Putrawan (1990), purposive sampling is a sampling technique used by a researcher if he has certain considerations in taking the sample or determining the sample for a particular purpose. The sample that is the source of data is the Chinese family that is not passed through the city.

Based on the problems examined, the method used in this research is qualitative descriptive. Descriptive research method is the method used to analyze the events that occur at the time of the research. Descriptive research is a research method that is done to obtain an overview of the circumstances that occur in the present or ongoing. Qualitative descriptive method is a method used to describe the situation and the basic data.

4. Results and Discussion

The results showed that of the 15 Chinese families interviewed said that generally they choose Indonesian as a tool for communicating with people they meet on a daily basis, as Langsa City is a multilingual city inhabited by various tribes although the city of Langsa itself is a part of the provinces of Aceh but in general, most of the residents in Langsa use Indonesian as a medium for communicating with other citizens; therefore, the Chinese say they prefer Indonesian as the second language in their family. And out of the 15 respondents there were 4 heads of households who said they preferred the language of Aceh as their second language because they had lived in Langsa Aceh for a long time and they were interested in the language of Aceh to learn. They said that they did not specifically study the language of Aceh, this is all caused by the environmental factors where they are living using the language of Aceh. From this they are used to listening then can speaking Aceh even though not all the words they can say. This is because they like to shop in traditional markets in the city of Langsa. And the reason they do not choose Indonesian as a second language in their families is like other Chinese families because they think their children can learn Indonesian in their own educational environment and places. Then Indonesian is the connecting language for communicating with people who have different regional languages.

4. Conclusion

Language choice is "a language as a whole" in a communication. The emergence of language selection is caused by the occurrence of language, social, and cultural contact so that a growing group of speech communities who have the ability to choose language or language code in a particular event, either maintaining the first language or shifting language to a new language or mixing first language and new language.

Someone who chooses the language in his communication is actually applying his communicative competence or is showing his communicative performance. As a behaviour, the choice of language is essentially an action or behaviour in using selected language based on the available situation.

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As in Chinese families who live in Aceh Langsa they choose Indonesian language in their communication. In the family there is the choice of language into Indonesian because they are afraid of having difficulties in speaking Indonesian when their child is educated, as generally in schools of Langsa they use Indonesian as a language to communicate with other students and teachers in the school environment. The same opinion is also expressed by the language of Fasold (1984) that it is not as simple as we imagine, namely to choose "a language as a whole" (all languages) in communication. We can find people who have two languages.

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