

### Abstract

This study is a library study aimed at figuring out how language attitude plays an important role in maintaining particular language, by taking a look at the case of Javanese language. Javanese language is viewed as a case here, as Javanese language is considered as being endangered though not by the size but by the fact that it has lost its public function, it is no longer effectively taught to the next generation, and it has undergone shrinkage in both variety and properties. Language contact, language policy, and language attitude are seen as the reasons of Javanese language shifted by Bahasa Indonesia. Javanese positive language attitude is suggested as the key factor in maintaining Javanese language because the first two factors are inevitable and are difficult to be changed. Positive language attitude is important in maintaining Javanese language because once the attitude is enriched with the cognitive and affective aspects of considering Javanese language as part of the speakers identity and culture in the bigger sense the attitude toward Javanese language will be positive and this will lead to positive behavior toward Javanese language as well.

Key word: language attitude, Javanese language, language shift, language maintenance.

## 1. Introduction

Indonesia as a country known as having many local languages, which represent different tribes or cultures. Due to political reason, however, there has been an intensive effort to acknowledge and enforce the use of Bahasa Indonesia as the national language. The availability of one united language is indeed giving a positive effect for the establishment of political policy within a national range. According to Eastman (1983: 64), the more homogenous a nation is and language is one of the indicators for the nation's homogeneity and the easier it is for the nation to reach prosperousness.

However, within multilingualism context, the variety of languages does not only refer to the variety of languages used, but also to the variety of cultures related to those languages. Hence, when a language has a decreased use, there is a tendency of losing certain aspects in the culture in which the language is spoken. The same fact also happens in Javanese language, in that the less it is used, the more aspects of the culture that are no longer found. Hence, the idea of maintaining the culture, should be in line with the need to maintain the language in which the culture is spoken and as language is seen as part of identity (Hudson, 1996), thus it is important to be maintained.

There are of course several factors contributing to the less use of a language, and one of which is negative language attitude (Eastman, 1983). The reversed condition is also true, then, that positive attitude will lead to easier language maintenance. This paper will take a look at how language attitude plays an important role in maintaining a language.

## 2. The Present Condition of Javanese Language

In discussing the present condition of Javanese language, it is important to pay attention on its present function, its sustainability, and the picture of its property such as its variety and vocabularies.

---

<sup>1</sup> Presented in International Seminar of Language Maintenance and Shift II, July 2 – 3, 2013 Semarang.

more than 75 millions of its native speakers (O'Neil: 2011) is an Island. When it is viewed from the numbers of its speakers, it is being endangered because according to Krauss (in Nettle and Riebel: 2003) which has fewer than 10.000 speakers that is considered as an endangered language. Nevertheless, we are also aware that the use of Javanese language today has decreased, both as a means of written and spoken communication. As a means of spoken language, Javanese language is in a loss battle with Bahasa Indonesia. The same condition holds true for the written language as well.

Today Javanese language is used as vernacular language and its use is restricted mostly on family domain, while Bahasa Indonesia enjoys its national language status, and therefore is used more on public domain (Dardjowidjojo, 1998). In fact, some people also use Bahasa Indonesia to communicate in domestic domain. This different functions shows diglossic condition of Javanese language and Bahasa Indonesia with Bahasa Indonesia holds a higher status than Javanese language. The lower status of Javanese language will result in the fewer setting of use, as by having lower status, Javanese language will only be appropriate to be used in informal setting. In other words, Javanese language vitality is weakening because the range of use and its symbolic functions is decreasing (Myers-Scotton, 2002). The fewer setting of which the language can be used will shrink its domain. When the language is used in fewer setting, that is to say that its domain has shrunk, the language then, is considered as being endangered (Eastman, 1983) since the future implication of the shrinkage domain is the less use of the language.

Another concern of saying that Javanese language is in endangered condition, is the fact that Javanese language is no longer taught to the next generation as their mother tongue, and therefore there is an issue on its sustainability. It is a common fact today, that parents although they are native Javanese speakers may use Bahasa Indonesia to communicate with their children, and thus make their children acquire Bahasa Indonesia as their native language instead of Javanese language. In that way, the further use of Javanese language is threatened, as the number of native speakers is also shrinking from generation to generation. This is surely distressing, because in an extreme language shift condition, a language may extinct within three generations if it is not passed on as mother tongue (Portes, 2002).

Though Javanese language is still actively spoken, we understand that among the different varieties of the one showing social level or honorific of Javanese language, what is commonly used is the Ngoko Javanese, and many abandon the use of Krama Javanese due to the lower level of proficiency. Besides, the shrinkage of variety, its language properties are also shrinking. The obvious case is the no longer use of vocabularies for proper names of animal or plants. In Javanese, almost all of baby animal has its own name that is different from its adult. For example *bledug* is the name of baby elephant, *pedhet* is for baby cow, *cempe* is for baby goat, *gudel* for baby buffalo and so on. English also has such naming, but compared to Javanese naming, Javanese language provides more names for baby animals. There are also more names for parts of plants which normally cover the names of the leaves and the flowers. For example, the leaf of *mlinjo* is called *so*, while the chili flower is called *menik*. Today, not many of those namings are known by Javanese speakers as it is easier to name baby elephant as baby elephant rather than *bledug*. There are also many Javanese vocabularies that are no longer used mostly because it has lost its function. For example the use of the words such as *pincuk* (banana leaf function as plate), *suru* (banana leaf function as spoon) *luweng* (traditional stove made of brick) or *pogo* (food cabinet made of bamboo) are no longer used because their functions have been replaced by modern products that come along with their names (Nurweni, 2011)

### 3. Why Javanese Language is Shifted

It is probably not an arguable issue anymore to say that Javanese language is shifted to Bahasa Indonesia as most of public domains, which were once occupied by the use of Javanese, now have been occupied by Bahasa Indonesia. There are of course many reasons for such shift to take place. Here, I will focus on three important notes of language contact, language policy, and language attitude, which I reckon as important factors in determining the shift of a language.

#### 3.1. Language contact

condition in which more than one language is available and used in a speech community. Language contact will generate various language contact effects, - the minimal effect, - the changing of morphosyntax system, - the loss of a language of the extreme condition (Myers-Scotton, 2002). Language contact may occur when the speakers learn their second language (L2) after mastering their native language (L1). It may also occur in a speech community which uses at least two languages, hence the children acquire their second language at the same time of their first language acquisition.

In both occurrences of language contact, there are two possibilities of effects. First, the members of that speech community will have the ability to speak more than two languages ó hence it creates bilingualism. Second, it creates diglossic conditions, in which the speakers are able to speak in two languages and are aware which language has higher status (H) and which language has lower status (L) (Holmes: 2001). Though both occurrences may result in bilingualism and diglossic, however, on the second occurrence ó in which the L2 is acquired at or almost at the same time with the L1 ó it is more likely that diglossic condition will occur.

It is in diglossic condition that the probability of language shift or language loss to occur is higher due to the different status of languages used. In many cases, the language which has higher status will shift the vernacular language even though at the beginning it was the vernacular that was used by almost 100% of its speakers in almost all domains. This is also what happens with Javanese language. It is a vernacular language which was used in many public domains but today its use is more restricted on domestic domain. According to Purwoko (2011) three decades ago, Javanese language was still used as the medium of instruction in elementary schools of the 1<sup>st</sup> ó 3<sup>rd</sup> grades in Central Java and East Java. Today, however, it is Bahasa Indonesia that is used as the medium of instruction in all schools including in playgroup.

### 3.2. Language Policy

Language policy established by Indonesian government in acknowledging Bahasa Indonesia as national language results in the shifting of Javanese language functions as a means of communication. This policy is supported wholeheartedly by Indonesian people including Javanese due to its long efforts in establishing Indonesian identity after such a long years of Dutch colonialization (Dardjowidjojo, 1998). The implication of this policy is that Bahasa Indonesia becomes the language used in every formal setting or public domain. Since Indonesian people have a very positive attitude toward this policy, it is easy to establish the policy goal though the life of vernacular language is at a stake.

### 3.3 Language Attitude

Language attitude is an attitude toward a language and the speakers of that language. According to Garret, et.al., language attitude has three components; cognitive, affective, and behavior. Cognitive aspect is formed through thought ó both by individual and group efforts ó resulted from stereotype toward a language and its speakers. Affective aspect is related with what one feels in accordance with a language, while behavior aspect is seen more on how people consciously or unconsciously behave toward a language (Garret.et.al., 2003).

Those three aspects are not formed without reason. There are many factors forming language attitude. According to Ciscel. et.al., (2000:49) ólanguage attitude is the value both socio-personal and socio-economic ascribed to a particular languageéí ö that is constructed through interactions within a speech community. The socio-personal context is referred to how a language is related to sentimental attachment ó which means the language is related with personal attachment such as personal, or group identity and also as cultural heritage. Socio-economic context, on the other hand, is related with instrumental attachment ó which means the language is used as a tool to get an easier access for better living such as being able to get a better job due to the ability to speak a particular language (Eastman: 1983).

## 4. Language Maintenance

a condition in which the language speakers make an effort to its use as a means of communication, or by raising its status language maintained refers to the language in the wider speech which is necessary to enforce its maintenance. The establishment of a policy to raise the language status, for example, will affect the use of that language within the wider context, because the higher the status of a language is, the more it will be used in more domains. Nevertheless, it is important to have a positive language attitude to achieve such condition.

When there is no language policy to support the language maintained or the policy does not make the wider use of particular language, as in the case of Javanese language ó the policy established has made Javanese language no longer appropriate to be used in public domain as it is Bahasa Indonesia which is recognized as the official language ó the language will be more difficult to be maintained, and it will need more positive language attitude to successfully maintain it.

Since one of the aspects in language attitude is behavior (Garret, et.al., 2003), that is to say that language attitude will create language behavior, then positive language attitude will also create positive language behavior. If the cognitive and affective aspects are also very supporting ó for example the language speakers feel that their language is part of their identity, and that their language reflects their valuable culture ó then their language behavior will also be very positive. In other words, they will maintain their language consciously even though there is no language policy that support their behavior.

#### 4.1. Suggestion from the previous studies

The previous studies show conclusive result of the importance of language attitude in maintaining a language. One of them is what has been studied by *Balai Bahasa* Semarang on Javanese language attitude of Junior High School students (Handono, et.al., 2011). The study shows that the students indeed has positive attitude toward Javanese language, both as a vernacular language and also as one of the subject taught in schools. Though it is not clear, to what variety the Javanese language is referred to in this study, the study does suggest the positive behavior resulted from the positive language attitude.

The wider scale study was conducted by Jamaican Language Unit as a survey on language attitude in 2005 in Jamaica. This survey on 1000 respondents is targeted to find out their language attitude toward Patwa language, their vernacular language, and English as the official language. The study shows that most of the respondents have positive language attitude toward English and therefore they prefer to use English in more domains and no longer teach Patwa effectively as their children's native language.

Similar result was obtained from Marley (2004)'s study in Morocco. Although the new policy states that the local language is important to be taught, the respondents prefer to use Arabic as the united language and French as the previous official language, due to their positive attitude toward Arabic and French.

#### 5. Conclusion

Javanese language is a good example of a case in language shift. Today, the process of shifting from Javanese language to Bahasa Indonesia is observable due to the fact that Javanese language is no longer function as a means of communication in public domain, that it is no longer taught effectively to the next generation ó hence it loses the chance to become the native language, and that it has undergone shrinkage both in variety and properties. Language contact, language policy, and language attitude are blamed for such shift to happen. Nothing can be done in regard to language contact as it is inevitable and it is part of the result of language policy which is also difficult to be withdrawn. The possible way to maintain Javanese language, or at least to slow down the shifting process is by encouraging positive attitude toward Javanese language, in the hope that positive language attitude ó constructed by cognitive and affective aspect of acknowledging the language as part of the speakers' identity ó will create positive language behavior.

- Ciscel, M.H., Hallett, R.W., and Green, A. (2000). Language Attitude and Identity in the European Republics of the Former Soviet Union. *Texas Linguistic Forum*. 44(1): 48 ó 61
- Dardjowidjojo, Soenjono. (1998). Strategies for Successful National Language Policy: the Indonesian Case. *Int'l J. Soc. Lang*. 130: 35 - 47
- Eastman, Carol M. (1983). *Language Planning, an introduction*. San Fransisco: Chandler &Sharp Publisher. Inc.
- Garret, P., Coupland, N., and Williams, A. (2003). *Investigating Language Attitudes*. Cardiff: University of Wales Press.
- Handono, S., Setyaningsih N.R., Sudono A., dan Widada. (2011). *Sikap Bahasa Siswa SMP di Eks-karesidenan Semarang terhadap Bahasa Jawa*.  
[http://www.balaibahasajateng.web.id/index.php/read/penelitian\\_detail/207](http://www.balaibahasajateng.web.id/index.php/read/penelitian_detail/207)
- Holmes, Janet. (2001). *An Introduction to Sociolinguistics*. Second ed. England: Pearson Education Ltd.
- Hudson, R.A. (1996) *Sociolinguistics*. Cambridge: CUP
- Marley, D. (2004). Language attitudes in Marocco Following Recent Changes in Language Policy. *Language Policy*. 3: 25 ó 46.
- Myers-Scotton, C.(2002). *Contact Linguistics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- O'Neil, D. (2011). *Language and Culture*. [http://anthro.palomar.edu/language/ language\\_1.htm](http://anthro.palomar.edu/language/language_1.htm).  
2 Juli 2011
- Nettle, D, and Romaine, S. (2000). *Vanishing Voices: the Extinction of the World's Languages*. Oxford: Oxford University Press
- Nurweni, A. (2011). The Shrinkage of Javanese Vocabulary. *Proceedings of International Seminar on Language Maintenance and Shift*. Undip Postgraduate Program. Semarang 2 July 2011. p.113 -117
- Portes, A. (2002). English-only Triumph, but the Costs are High. *Context*. 1:10-15
- Purwoko, H. (2011). If Javanese is Endangered, How Should We Maintain it? *Proceedings of International Seminar on Language Maintenance and Shift*. Undip Postgraduate Program. Semarang 2 July 2011. p. 22- 30.
- The Jamaican Language Unit. (2005). *Report on Language Attitude Survey in Jamaica*  
<http://www.mona.uwi.edu/dllp/jlu/projects/survey.htm>