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Balai Bahasa Provinsi Jawa Tengah



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“The Role of Indigenous Languages in Constructing Identity”

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NOTE

This international seminar on Language Maintenance and Shift V (LAMAS V for short) is a continuation of the previous LAMAS seminars conducted annually by the Master Program in Linguistics, Diponegoro University in cooperation with *Balai Bahasa Provinsi Jawa Tengah*.

We would like to extend our deepest gratitude to the seminar committee for putting together the seminar that gave rise to this compilation of papers. Thanks also go to the Head and the Secretary of the Master Program in Linguistics Diponegoro University, without whom the seminar would not have been possible.

The table of contents lists 92 papers presented at the seminar. Of these papers, 5 papers are presented by invited keynote speakers. They are Prof. Aron Reppmann, Ph.D. (Trinity Christian College, USA), Prof. Yudha Thianto, Ph.D. (Trinity Christian College, USA), Dr. Priyankoo Sarmah, Ph.D. (Indian Institute of Technology Guwahati, India), Helena I.R. Agustien, Ph.D. (Semarang State University, Indonesia), and Dr. M. Suryadi, M.Hum. (Diponegoro University, Indonesia).

In terms of the topic areas, the papers are in sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics, theoretical linguistics, antropolinguistics, pragmatics, applied linguistics, and discourse analysis.

NOTE FOR REVISED EDITION

There is a little change in this revised edition, which as the shifting of some parts of the article by Tatan Tawami and Retno Purwani Sari entitled “Sundanese Identity Represented by the Talents of *Ini Talkshow* A Study of Pragmatics” on page 166 to 167. This has an impact on the change of table of contents.

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"The Role of Indigenous Languages in Constructing Identity"**

WEDNESDAY, SEPTEMBER 2, 2015					
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WOTU LANGUAGE IN ENDANGERED PHASE: SOLUTION FOR REVITALIZING WOTU LANGUAGE

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ABSTRACT

This paper explores the sociolinguistics practices of members of a minority language in East Luwu South Sulawesi, the Wotunese Community. The concern of this paper is to construct the way out of saving the Wotu language from the death language phenomenon. The data collected on the language use and the determinant factors are taken as basic idea in constructing the way out of saving the Wotu language from the death language phenomenon. The findings on language choice and language use show clear evidence of the endangerment of Wotu language. The Wotunese, mostly the young generation tend to use other languages than wotu language. This means that a real language shift is happening in Wotu district.. Then, there are some solution that the researcher suggests how to revitalize the Wotu language which is in endangered phase, those are : (1). The commitment of Wotu language speech community especially the Family domain. (2). Cultural activities should be supported. (3). The role Education Institution (4). Media (5). Local government Support (6). Positive Language attitude should be developed. Then the researcher also suggest some important things as follows: It is very important to do some real actions related to the efforts to revitalize the Wotu language. The stakeholders such as local government, public figure of Wotunese and also the linguist should have a good commitment to make the language planning of Wotu language successful.

Keywords: Wotu Language, Endangered Phase, Solution for Revitalizing.

INTRODUCTION

Bahasa Wotu is one of minority languages in South Sulawesi. The existence of Bahasa Wotu as language not as a dialect was supported by some researchers, such as Salombe et al (1987) from Hasanuddin University, Vail (1987) from The Summer Institute of Linguistic. Dola (2003) states that the speakers of this language is about 4000 people, and the active speaker is less 500 people. In addition most of the active speakers are upper 50 year old people. In addition, Dola (2003) states that it is estimated, in short times, Wotu language which do not have orthography, will not serve as a lingua franca among the Wotunese any longer.

Furthermore, the speakers of Wotu language reside in the Wotu district, East Luwu Regency, Soth Sulawesi Province. They live predominantly in two villages namely Lampenai Village and Bawalipu Village. The number of population in desa Bawalipu is 5.704 and in Desa Lampenai is 5.036. (Central Board of Statistic Board of East Luwu Regency, 2007). Wotunese live together with the other ethnic groups who come as immigrants in that area, such as Buginese, Makassarrese, Javanese, Torajanese and they keep using their own local languages. Based on the data from preliminary observation research through interview with the Wotunese, some said that nowadays only very small number of Wotunese who keep using Wotu language. Furthermore, most of the Wotunese do not really master the language but just know a little about the Wotu language. Only the older, more than 50 years old people, who are able to master it. Currently, Bahasa Indonesia and Buginese languages are the dominant languages used in the areas populated by the Wotu people. In the school, Bahasa Indonesia is used as a language of instruction in all levels of education TK, SD, SMP, SMA. Beside English as national curriculum, Buginese also is taught at school as local load teaching in the schools' curriculum. In their daily life, the people in that area mostly use Bahasa Indonesia and Buginese, it is rarely found the people to use Wotu language. When the Wotunese meet with the other tribes, they seldom to introduce their language, and most of Wotunese, especially the young generation fell shy to speak Wotu language. They prefer to use Buginese in their daily life conversation in society. Then in formal situation absolutely they use Bahasa Indonesia. Therefore, we just can listen Wotu language when certain older people use it at their homes. In addition, in public places such as in market, mosque etc, most people use Bahasa Indonesia and Buginese.

Based on the result of some data previously, it was found that Wotunese have shifted their language into others language. This paper attempts to propose some suggestion how to revitalize the wotu language.

METHOD

This study was a qualitative since this study also collected the supporting data by using interview and observation through recording and note taking in their daily life at some particular domain and situation in the field. Then, the researcher also confirmed with some theories about revitalizing language shift, also the interview with some wotunese was the source of data in constructing the recommendation for saving the Wotu language.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The solution is constructed based on the evidence in Wotu area and also a result from synthesis of some previous theory such as Fishman and Crystal. There are some solution that the researcher suggests, those are:

1. The Commitment of Wotunese Families.

Commitment of family domain use Wotu language is one of the important way to save the wotu language from the death language phenomenon. The use of language use at home determines the language of the next generation. Then, evidently the best thing to maintain a language is to use it. The daily use of one's mother tongue is, however, only possible if one is surrounded by an active speech community. Furthermore, the speech community is important for language transmission, as it takes place in the nucleus of every speech community – the family. Having a well functioning home-family-neighborhood-community is therefore the crucial stage to be attained in an effort to reverse language shift. In an active speech community, cultural activities are organized and initiatives generated with the aim of maintaining the minority's language and culture. Nettle and Romaine even find it important that language maintenance efforts are financed in the early stages by the community itself since "dependence on state resources undermines the minority's responsibility and right to control its own affairs" (Nettle/Romaine 2000: 189). Ideally, a speech community should be highly localized and have only a limited amount of exogamy. Furthermore, minority groups should decide on what can best be done for their language and should have the will and the energy to realize their projects.

2. Cultural Activities Should be Supported.

Many cultural activities should be conducted in Wotu district in order to create a good atmosphere in using Wotu language. The official status of a linguistic minority as well as its legal and financial situation are generally considered as less important for language maintenance than other factors, such as 'community commitment'. Cultural and linguistic rights may nevertheless positively influence language maintenance. For instance, a minority group's self-esteem may be raised if its culture becomes valued and protected. Furthermore, the eroding of cultural differences through modernisation and democratisation may be lessened if the cultural and linguistic rights of minorities are protected and cultivated (Fishman 1991: 64). It is therefore justified to demand a sound legal status for minority languages at both the national and the international level. The financial situation of a community is also important. Crystal believes that at least £360 mn is needed to cover three years of work (by one linguist) dedicated to each of the 3,000 most endangered languages (Crystal 2000: 95). Clearly fund raising is essential for any language maintenance project.

3. The Role Education Institution

Education in the mother tongue can be an important factor in language maintenance efforts, especially if education is interpreted in its broadest sense. An ideal education system should include extra-curricular activities such as language playgroups, summer immersion camps, or community based programmes involving older members of the community. Language courses should be closely linked to the community and its opportunities for active communication. The school has an important role to play in providing pupils with a cultural identity and contributing to greater self-confidence by teaching them about the history and literature of their language (Fishman 2001: 470-471, Crystal 2000: 137).

Fishman and Crystal warn, however, against overestimating education and transferring too much responsibility to the school system (Fishman 2001: 470; Crystal 2000 136). According to Fishman, this is why the revitalization of Irish has so far failed (Fishman 1991:402). He stresses that language study for RLS purposes will be unsuccessful unless there is a community in which the language is actively used (Fishman 2001: 470-471). Where there is an active community, education in the mother

tongue is of course desirable. The use of the minority language in secondary and higher education may help the language to shrug off its image as a family language.

4. Media

Media is important thing to be used in saving Wotu language. Access to the media is useful for raising the profile of a minority. In this way, the prestige of a minority within the dominant community can be raised (Crystal 2000: 130). Without occasional programmes dealing with the minority group, many of the majority may not even be aware of the existence of a minority in their country. Sorbian author Jurij Bržan illustrated this point in an interview by stating that German Chancellor Schröder had never heard of the Sorbians until a political trip to Dresden. When asked how the German state could more effectively support the Sorbians, Bržan had just one wish: the political establishment should go out and tell the Germans about the Sorbians and their history (Wolf 2001: 49-50).

This sort of publicity should of course happen via the dominant language and in the majority's mass media. Media in the minority language is generally not considered a top priority for saving the language, especially because of the high costs involved. Crystal therefore suggests the Internet as a cheaper alternative and Fishman places the media in the last stages of his scale. He believes that local media in the minority language can be useful, especially in shaping adult identity and language use. However, its usefulness for implanting mother tongue use in the young is doubtful (Fishman 1991: 403-404). Yet, if other more urgent requirements (according to Fishman's scale) are fulfilled and money is available, the creation of a local radio station or newspaper will certainly have a positive effect on a speech community. Newspapers and radio stations are excellent media for introducing new vocabulary to a language. The use of media is part of our daily language use and if a speech community has no access to media in its own language then its language use is restricted. It also increases the prestige of a language in the eyes of its speakers, if they can hear their language daily on the radio or on TV.

5. Local Government Support

Support from the government to save the wotu language is important. The importance of official support in the form of linguistic rights and funding is still subject to debate. Nettle and Romaine warn against overestimating official support by pointing out the cases of the Hawaiian and Irish languages. Both have been official languages for a long time, but are still in a precarious position. The reason for this lies in a lack of voluntary efforts and ideological commitment (2000: 39, 188). Paulston even suggests that tough conditions for a minority might sometimes be better than official support, as they can provoke stubbornness and resistance in the community: "In hard times, man will cling to his language and ethnic group; in times of plenty, man pays little attention to resources like ethnic languages" (Paulston 1994: 24). This explanation might indeed have a grain of truth, but cannot, of course, be the solution for saving endangered languages. It seems very doubtful that such resistance can be upheld for a long time, say over several generations. Furthermore, if a language has official status, its speakers receive administrative forms and official documents – in short all their correspondence with the authorities – in their mother tongue. Contrary to newspapers and books, official letters and forms must be read. Their importance for language maintenance therefore should not be overlooked. In an ideal language maintenance situation, minorities are protected by linguistic and cultural rights, but should have the rights and the power to decide upon their own language maintenance projects.

6. Language Attitude

One of the important aspect that should be developed is create a positive language attitude of Wotunese. A recurring factor in theories of language maintenance and shift is the factor of language attitudes. This factor involves the amount of prestige and importance given to a minority language both by the minority and the majority group in relation to the majority language. Thus, one could also speak of the unofficial status of languages. In one form or other, this concept is present in almost all theories of language maintenance. In David Crystal's theory of language revitalisation, increasing the prestige of a minority language within the dominant community is the first of his six postulates for successful revitalization efforts. In his view, language attitudes are linked to community commitment, as a community can only increase the prestige of its language if it can make its presence felt within the wider community (Crystal 2000: 130). In Bourhis' theory of acculturation and language shift, the concept of attitudes can be found in what he calls "subjective ethnolinguistic vitality", a term that includes attitudes and beliefs of both

the minority and the majority group relative to the vitality of a community and its language (Bourhis 2001: 18). Paulston views a higher social prestige of the dominant language, together with expected economic advantages, as the major incentive for language shift. However, if the social prestige of the minority language is high, it is often deliberately maintained as a strong symbol of identity (Paulston 1994: 20-22). Some linguists even see language attitudes as *the* decisive factor in language maintenance. David Bradley, for instance, writes in his essay "Language Attitudes: the Key Factor in Language Maintenance" that as long as minority people have a positive attitude towards their language no linguist is needed to save it (Bradley 2002: 9). He mentions two overall attitudes that are key to language maintenance. First, the attitude of the group towards its ethnolinguistic vitality; second whether the language is regarded as a key aspect of the identity of the group. Both Bourhis and Paulston stress these factors too.

Bradley's analysis of various beliefs and perceptions shows that the attitude factor encompasses a broad field – attitudes towards several linguistic and sociolinguistic factors can have a bearing on language maintenance. The beliefs of not only the minority group but also of the majority and other minorities are important. This multidimensional view can only be obtained over a long period of time and with a great amount of work. Ideally, the view of the majorities and minorities in relation to language diversity in their countries should be as positive as possible. Nevertheless, they should also believe in the advantages of standardizing languages.

CONCLUSION

There are some solution that the researcher suggests how to revitalize the Wotu language which is in endangered phase, those are : (1). The commitment of Wotu language speech community especially the Family domain. (2). Cultural activities should be supported. (3) The role Education Institution (4). Media (5). Local government Support (6). Positive Language attitude should be developed.

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