

WHY WEST ACEHNESE SHIFT THEIR DIALECT TO OTHER ACEHNESE DIALECT

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study was to investigate the reasons for dialect shifting by speakers from West Aceh when they speak Acehnese outside of the West Aceh area. A qualitative method was used for this research. The data was collected using interviews following an interview guide. The researcher interviewed the informants who were all from West Aceh and living in Banda Aceh for educational purposes. Based on the results from the interviews, the researcher found that the West Acehnese shifted their dialect into other dialects when they spoke with other Acehnese outside of West Aceh. The dialect was shifted by them for various reasons, such as lacking confidence to use their own dialect, to avoid embarrassment or being ridiculed by other speakers, to make them easier to be understood, to get acceptance and respect from the community where they were and due to being influenced, unconsciously, by other, more dominant dialects.

Keywords: *Acehnese Dialect, Dialect Shifting, West Acehnese Speakers*

INTRODUCTION

The distinctive way in which people speak is interesting to observe. This phenomenon is one of the never ending topics that triggers interest by many researchers. The distinct way in which a group of individuals speaks the same language is called a dialect or an accent. Wolfram (2007) has said that a dialect is a particular variety of a language that is used by a certain group of people who speak that

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language. In addition, he has said that in a language, there are many aspects which are different in a dialect, such as pronunciation, semantical and grammatical aspects and differences in the use of words in the language. The use of certain words may also trigger distinctions about their politeness in meanings. The results from Aziz's research (2016) revealed that the West Aceh dialect was often regarded as impolite and rude by non-West Acehnese. Meanwhile, the North Aceh dialect was regarded by all Acehnese people, including those from West Aceh as a polite and refined dialect.

Asyik (1987) has classified Acehnese into four dialects, first, Greater Aceh dialect that is spoken by people in Banda Aceh, Aceh Besar and Greater Aceh (Aceh Jaya). Second, there are some districts where the people speak the Pidie dialect, such as Pidie and Pidie Jaya. Third, there are several districts where the speakers use the North Aceh dialect, namely, Bireuen, Lhokseumawe, North Aceh, and East Aceh. Lastly, the West Aceh dialect which is one of the languages spoken by people living on the West Coast in West Aceh, Nagan Raya, Southwest Aceh, and South Aceh.

Living in a different geographical area may drive people to interact with a different language or dialect. When a person goes from one region or district to another, he could find people who speak a different dialect. If he understands the dialect, which is spoken by the people in that district, this means that there is mutual intelligibility (Chambers & Trudgill, 2004).

It is possible that a person will use a certain dialect which is not the speaker's own dialect. For example, a person from West Aceh may use the North Aceh dialect. However, the use of a different dialect is usually caused by staying in an area, which has its own dialect, for a long time and interacting with the society there. The shift can be caused by many reasons, such as marriage, education, occupation and prestige. Dialect shifting based on a location is called a geographical dialect shift (Chambers & Trudgill, 2004). For example, a group of individuals coming to live in Banda Aceh, could start to use the Greater Aceh dialect. When dialect shifting is caused by interaction it is called a social dialect shift (Ammon et al., 2004). For instance, the shifting of dialect in college can occur with young people, 20-25 years old.

Not all people shift their dialect, even though they move to a different dialect area for a long time. Most people usually keep on using their own dialect when they speak. Based on the researcher's experience, she observed that the Acehnese speakers from North Aceh

maintained their dialect wherever they went. They were not easily influenced by any of the other dialects, especially, in intonation and when using the uvular /r/. This could be because they feel that their dialect is the most prestigious amongst all the other dialects.

Conversely, those from the West Coast of Aceh appear to be easily influenced by the other dialects, especially when they are communicating with people from the other dialect areas. The researcher assumed that this occurred because there were some factors that influenced them to easily shift to another dialect, such as they felt that their West Aceh dialect was crude, weird and/or difficult to be understood or lacked prestige, so that they were not confident enough to use it. To avoid such embarrassment, the West Acehese speakers will adjust their speech to the interlocutors' dialect. If they insist on using their own dialect most other Acehese will look confused. On the other hand, the opposite case also occurs when speakers from outside West Aceh use their own dialect and as interlocutors, the West Acehese people become confused.

Nonetheless, Zulfadli (2014) has argued that the reason why West Acehese speakers shift dialect when speaking with an interlocutor from an area that uses another dialect is because of their capacity to adapt their communications to the dialect used by the other speaker. Based on the statement above, the researcher was interested to find out more information about dialect shifting in Acehese which is done by many people in Aceh. Hence, the researcher conducted this research study entitled "Why West Acehese shift their dialect to other Acehese dialects".

LITERATURE REVIEW

Dialect

According to Wolfram and Schilling (2016), the term "dialect" refers to any variety of language that is shared by a distinct group of people which has different features. A dialect is a variety of language used by a group whose linguistic habit patterns both reflect and are determined by shared regional, social, and cultural perspectives (Holmes, 2013).

Meyerhoff (2006) has said that a dialect distinguishes language features at the level of pronunciation, vocabulary, and sentence structure. A language can have many dialects that are spoken by different groups of people that share the same language. They speak

with different varieties of dialect, such as with different pronunciation, but conveying the same meaning, different word usage but meaning the same thing.

Kinds of Dialect

According to Chambers and Trudgill (2004), dialects are classified into social dialects and geographical dialects. They propose that a social dialect is influenced by aspects, such as social class, style, prestige, gender, ethnicity, social level and social network plus individual characteristics. Meanwhile, a geographical dialect is related to the location where people live thus a rural dialect is different from an urban one. In a geographical dialect, velar 'r' is a main point of diversity when speakers utter it or a word that contains velar 'r' (Zulfadli, 2014). He also states that velar 'r' is a prominent phonological feature to identify the West Aceh dialect. Yet, it is almost the same in the Greater Aceh dialect.

Consonant 'r' is one of the segmental sounds that exist in all languages in the world, with both national and international languages and even with vernacular languages (Chaira, 2015), including for instance, the Acehnese language. However, not all people pronounce it the same. The differences in how a segmental sound is pronounced become dialect diversity.

Besides speaking a language in a way that corresponds to social status, most of the Acehnese speak their language based on their geographical dialect or even on the area where they live since every area in Aceh has its own dialect, not only in each district but also in each sub-district and even in each village.

Dialect Shifting

Dialect shifting is part of language style. The style of language may show shifting of usage levels based on language variation (Wolfram & Schilling, 2016). The latter also propose that style shifts may encompass feature on all language use levels which are used by speakers in speaking. These features include pronunciation, grammar, pragmatics, voice quality and degrees of speaker self-consciousness and audience relationship. However, dialect shifting only includes pronunciation features, grammatical features, word usage and morphological features (Meyerhoff, 2006).

Dialect shifting occurs with language speakers because of various factors, such as the region or area, the social class, ethnicity, prestige

and gender (Wolfram & Schilling, 2016). They assert that people will speak differently when they migrate to another place.

Language attitudes

According to Ajzen (2005, p. 3) attitudes are a combination of feelings and judgment to respond to something positively or negatively. Dweik and Qawar (2015) have said that language attitudes deal with someone's feelings toward his language or that of another: These attitudes can be positive or negative. Since language is the foremost medium used to communicate, the attitudes of people have a crucial effect in communication (Gruyter, 2004).

Besides, Meyerhoff (2006) has claimed that the attitudes of people determine the way they perceive a language or a variety of language used by a speaker. Then too, the attitude of a person can identify them. She further illustrates that the attitude of a person towards the language of a speaker is like when someone talks to a stranger on the phone. At first, she cannot imagine the face or the attitude of the interlocutor, however, as soon as he talks, she can visualize the interlocutor's attitude such as whether he is friendly or rude, competent or stupid.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Based on the results from the interviews, the informants shifted their dialect for various reasons, as can be seen in the responses below.

P1 : Iya, karena menurut saya dialek Aceh Barat kurang menarik digunakan ketika berkomunikasi dengan orang luar daerah Aceh Barat. Dan saya merasa kurang percaya diri.

'Yes, in my opinion the West Aceh dialect is less attractive to use when communicating with people from outside of the western areas of Aceh and (when I use it) I feel less confident.'

P6 : Ikutin dialek lawan bicara sebisa mungkin untuk memudahkan mereka memahami apa yang saya sampaikan dan juga menghindari keadaan yang memalukan.

'I follow the dialect of the other person as much as possible so that they can easily understand what I say and also to avoid feeling embarrassed'

P10 : *Iya, saya ubah. Supaya lawan bicara mudah paham dan tidak mengejek/menertawakan dialek Aceh Barat. Karena banyak perbedaan antara dialek Aceh Barat dengan dialek lain.*

‘Yes, I shift (dialect) so that the other person can easily understand and will not ridicule/laugh at the West Aceh dialect. Because there are many differences between the West Aceh dialect and other (Acehnese) dialects’.

Based on the responses of the participants, they shifted their dialect to avoid ridicule and to make it easier for other speakers to understand what the speakers from western Aceh were saying. One of them also had another reason as he felt less confident when using the dialect from western Aceh when speaking with people who spoke the other Acehnese dialects. He also felt that the dialect from western Aceh was less interesting to use.

Besides the influence of the dialect of the other speaker, some of the speakers from western Aceh also chose to use a particular dialect when talking to people who were not from western Aceh. The most frequent dialect they selected was the northern Aceh dialect, which is understood by many people.

P10 : *Aceh Utara. Karena menurut saya dialek tersebut mudah dimengerti dan terdengar sopan. Karena dialek tersebut netral dan mudah dipahami oleh semua orang Aceh.*

‘The North Aceh dialect, in my opinion, that dialect is easy to understand and (also) it is regarded as polite. I use that dialect because that dialect is neutral and is understood by all Acehnese’

Another respondent stated that he used the dialect which the other speaker used. His purpose was to ensure that the other speakers would not be confused and could easily understand what he said.

P4 : *Tergantung lawan bicara, dan saya akan mengikuti dialek tersebut. karena dialek tersebut mudah dipahami oleh lawan bicara, supaya tidak membingungkan.*

‘It depends on the other speaker and I will follow that (person’s) dialect, because that dialect will be easy to understand by the other speaker, so that they will not be confused’

Similar to the above participant, another participant also chose a particular dialect to communicate with other people with whom he often socialized.

P6 : Menurut saya sendiri, saya menggunakan dialek Pidie. karena bersosialisasi dengan orang Pidie.
'I think I use Pidie dialect, because I socialize with people who come from Pidie'

The researcher also found a similar thing where the participant selected a dialect, because that dialect was almost the same as her dialect.

P2 : Saya menggunakan dialek Aceh Besar. karena dialek tersebut hampir sama dengan dialek Aceh Barat.
'I use the Greater Aceh dialect, because it is almost the same as The West Aceh dialect'

In fact, the speakers from western Aceh often chose to use the dialect used by the other speaker. That dialect was chosen by them because of whom they communicated with. They choose a certain dialect for various reasons, such as to make it easy for the other speakers to understand them or because they felt that the other dialect was more appropriate to use and sometimes they just imitated (the dialect) intuitively. If they have to talk to speakers of various Acehnese dialects at the same time, they will choose the most easily understandable dialect, and some of them will choose the North Aceh dialect, because it is considered a more polite and refined dialect as can be seen in the statements that follow.

P1 : Saya akan menggunakan dialek yang dipahami oleh banyak orang, dan biasanya saya memilih dialek Aceh Utara. karena menurut saya pengucapan lebih sopan dan intonasinya bagus.
'I will use the dialect that is understood by most people, and usually I choose the North Aceh dialect because, in my opinion, it sounds politer and has good intonation'

P4 : Iya, saya dengan lawan bicara saya jadi, saya mengikuti dialek lawan bicara. Namun jika lawan bicara bervariasi pada saat yang bersamaan saya akan memilih dialekt Aceh Utara

untuk berkomunikasi karena dialect tersebut netral digunakan dan mudah dipahami oleh khalayak umum.

‘Yes, I adapt to the other speaker, so I shift to the dialect of the other speaker. However, if there are other speakers with various other dialects at the same time, I will choose the North Aceh dialect to communicate with because that dialect is neutral to be used and easy to be understood by all’

However, some of them will still use their own dialect and will only shift if it is needed. P5 and P8 revealed this.

P5 : *Saya tidak mengubahnya, hanya saja saat lawan bicara tidak mengerti baru saya jelaskan dengan dialek yang digunakan oleh lawan bicara dengan memilih kata yang baik dan jelas.*

‘I do not shift, only if the other person does not understand, then I will explain using their dialect and choosing words which are good and clear’

P8 : *Dialek sendiri, namun jika lawan bicara bingung saya akan menyesuaikan dan merubahnya ke dialek lawan bicara.*

‘(I use) my own dialect, but if the person I’m speaking with is confused I will adapt and shift to use the dialect of the other person’

The statements above show that these participants only shifted their dialect when it was needed. Overall, they still used their own dialect, because they identified with it.

Everybody has his or her own attitude to a certain dialect or language. This attitude can be positive or negative. A speaker’s opinion of each dialect is based on some features, such as whether it is regarded as rude or refined. This can be seen below:

P1 : *Menurut saya dialek Aceh Barat itu pertengahan, tidak terlalu kasar dan tidak terlalu lembut/sopan. Menurut saya dialek Aceh Besar lebih kasar dan dialek Aceh Utara lebih lembut/sopan.*

‘In my opinion the Western Acehnese dialect is in the middle, neither too rude nor too refined. According to me the Greater Aceh dialect is ruder and the North Aceh dialect is more refined/polite’

P4 : Agak kasar penuturannya, banyak pilihan kata yang memalukan jika didengar orang dari daerah lain. Tapi jika dibandingkan dengan Aceh Besar, Aceh Barat masih lebih baik.
'(Personally I think the West Aceh dialect) sounds a little bit rude, with many words that sound embarrassing if people from other districts hear them. But, if it is compared with the greater Aceh dialect, the Western Aceh dialect is still better'

Other participants said that the West Aceh dialect was different from the other dialects. It has unique expressions and its intonation is rhythmic, according to some participants.

P5 : Pendapat saya dialek Aceh Barat terlalu berintonasi pada saat berbicara dan tidak terlalu kasar.
'In my opinion, the West Aceh dialect has too much intonation when it is spoken, and is not too rude'

P6 : Banyak kosa kata yang berbeda, misal 'saku' ipok, dan dialek sana sering menjadi bahan tertawaan.
'There are many words which are different, for example 'ipok', is the word for pocket, and the West Aceh dialect is often made fun of!'

Furthermore, P2 claimed that the West Aceh dialect was different from the other dialects because it was influenced by other vernacular languages in that area like 'Jamee'.

P2 : Dialek Aceh Barat berbeda dengan dialek lain, yang paling terlihat intonasinya, hal itu dipengaruhi oleh bahasa lain yang ada didaerah sana, seperti Bahasa Jamu, Kluet.
'West Aceh dialect is different from other dialects, especially the intonation, which is influenced by other vernacular languages used there such as *Jame* and *Kluet*,

Another feature that is characteristic of the West Aceh dialect is the utterance of 'r'. Speakers of west Aceh dialect do not utter 'r' with a trill, said some respondents:

P3 : *Penggunaan 'r' tidak bergetar seperti bunyi 'r' yang sebenarnya, terlalu mudah diucapkan bagi saya, intonasi tidak tinggi, tidak kasar dibandingkan Aceh Besar.*

'The use of 'r' in West Aceh dialect does not trill as the real sound 'r', for me, it is too easy to utter, and the intonation is not too high, but it is not rude compared to the Aceh Besar dialect'

P9 : *Tidak mengucapkan 'r' secara bergetar, banyak kosa kata beda.*

'(They) don't utter 'r' with a trill, many words are different'

According to the participants' responses, they have their own evaluation towards a language dialect. The responses above are those of the West Acehnese speakers about their own dialect, their own personal opinion toward their own dialect. Most of them admit that their dialect can sound rude and impolite to Acehnese who use a more refined dialect like that from northern Aceh and there are some words that can be inappropriate to use (embarrassing).

Nevertheless, the respondents have also commented on other Acehnes/dialects. Most of them said that the other dialects can also sound funny and weird to them. Here are responses about that.

P4 : *Terdengar aneh, lucu, karena pengucapan dan pilihan kata yang digunakan berbeda dengan yang kita gunakan. Dan saya menyadari ternyata banyak variasi Bahasa Aceh.*

'It sounds strange, droll, because the utterances and word choices which are used are different from those that we use. And I realize that Acehnese has many variations'

P7 : *Merasa lucu, mendengar orang berbicara berbeda dengan kita kadang bisa membuat tertawa.*

'It feels funny to hear people speak differently from us, sometimes it makes us laugh'

P10 : *Terdengar aneh, lucu, dan penasaran maksud kata yang diucapkan. Dan saya juga merasa senang karena Bahasa Aceh memiliki banyak variasi.*

'It sounds odd, funny and curious about the meaning of the words which are spoken. And also I feel glad because Acehnese has many variations.'

However, some of the west Acehnese speakers also said that it is normal that a language has many variations.

P5 : Biasa saja, karena semua orang menghargai bahasa daerah masing-masing dan juga bahasa daerah lain, terkadang muncul rasa lucu karena pengucapan dan pilihan kata yang berbeda. Ternyata Bahasa Aceh itu banyak ragamnya.

‘It is normal, because everyone respects his own language and languages from other areas, sometimes I feel droll because of what is said and the different word choices, actually, Acehnese has many variations’

P6 : Senang, karena Bahasa Aceh banyak variasi, dan melalui dialek bisa mengenal identitas penutur.

‘I like it, because Acehnese has many variations, and based on the dialect we can recognize the speakers’ identity’

The most common reaction to other dialects was feeling odd and droll. Whilst the respondents respected the Acehnese language because it has many variations, based on its variations, the west Acehnese speakers preferred to choose the best dialect from amongst all the Acehnese dialects.

P4 : Aceh Utara, karena penuturannya lembut/sopan, mudah dipahami.

‘North Aceh dialect, because the utterances are refined, polite and easy to understand’

P6 : Aceh Utara, lebih lembut, lebih pure Acehnya.

‘North Aceh dialect, it is more refined, the Acehnese sounds purer’

P10 : Aceh Utara, karena penuturannya sopan dan maknanya halus. Dan dialek Aceh

Utara netral. Mudah dipahami oleh banyak orang.

‘North Aceh dialect, because the utterances are polite and the meaning is refined. Besides, the North Aceh dialect is neutral. It is easily understood by many people’

Yet, generally, everything has a positive and a negative side. So, P9 said that there is no best dialect.

P9 : *Tidak ada, setiap dialek punya sisi positif dan negatifnya*
'No, each dialect has a positive and a negative side'

Almost all the informants said that the North Aceh dialect was the best dialect, because it is a neutral dialect which is used and understood by many Acehnese people. If the informants have to speak with other people from different regencies at the same time, they prefer to select the neutral dialect; the North Aceh dialect.

In relation to the dialect shifting which is done by West Acehnese speakers, they have various reasons that lead them to shift their dialect, which the researcher found, based on the results from the interviews, Firstly, they don't feel confident to use their own dialect. These speakers don't feel confident to speak their West Aceh dialect because some aspects of its dialect are stigmatized. In this study, the researcher found it, not only from North Acehnese speakers, but other Acehnese speakers also do it. This occurs because some WA dialect features are heard as rough, ridiculous, and weird. Because of that, the WA speakers do not feel confident to use their own dialect in front of people who are non-WA.

Secondly, to avoid embarrassment or ridicule from other speakers, the WA speakers don't use their own dialect because other Acehnese people ridicule the WA dialect. It is ridiculed because they say some of the words or phrases sound odd and other Acehnese speakers will mock it.

Thirdly, to make what they say easier to understand. Due to features of the WA dialect being different from other dialects, several words are not even recognized by speakers who are not from WA, which makes the WA speakers use the interlocutors' dialect or another dialect which is easy to understand. Here, people who speak such an Acehnese dialect prefer to switch to the other dialect and use it rather than make the interlocutors confused.

Fourthly, to gain acceptance and respect from the community where they are socializing. People, who are from the coast of WA are predictable as to how they will speak the language. Especially their pronunciation of /r/ and their intonation will seem to be melodic, so in places like Banda Aceh other Acehnese speakers will judge them as

strangers. In particular, as they are a minority group in the community, to avoid feeling as strangers, they will shift their dialect.

Finally, they are influenced unconsciously. This reason is the same as the third and fourth reasons. The WA speakers shift their dialect unconsciously, because they enjoy speaking Acehnese by using other dialects. In conclusion, all the above reasons occur because some features of the WA dialect can sound odd and funny, and some of them are not proper to use in front of Acehnese who are not from western Aceh.

CONCLUSIONS

The West Acehnese, when outside of West Aceh, have various reasons for why they shift their dialect. Firstly, they lack confidence to use their own dialect. Secondly, they want to avoid embarrassment or ridicule from other speakers. Thirdly, it makes it easier for their interlocutors to understand them. Fourthly, to gain the acceptance and respect from that community where they are socialized and finally, they are unconsciously influenced by the prestige associated with another Acehnese dialect especially the North Aceh dialect.

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