

**THE ENDEAVOUR OF LANGUAGE MAINTENANCE  
(A CASE STUDY EXPERIENCED BY AN INDONESIAN IMIGRANT IN NORWAY)**

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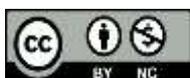
Page 272-277

**Abstract:**

This research discusses language maintenance experienced by an Indonesian immigrant in Norway. The method used in this research is descriptive qualitative method by using two instruments: interview and questionnaire. Two types of questions are used in the instrument, i.e. close-ended and open-ended ones. The objective of this research is to explain what kinds of activities as the endeavor of the immigrant in maintaining his native language (Indonesian). The result indicates that the activities conducted by the immigrant as the effort to maintain his native language (Indonesian) cover: 1) Joining the community of Indonesian immigrant in which he can do many activities like gathering together, having meals and travelling together, and discussing various topics including religious ones, 2) periodically-homecoming through which he can visit his family, relatives and friends such as during the Idul Fitri Holiday, 3) communicating with the family (once a week) in Indonesia through telephone or any other media like skype (video call) and facetime, even almost every day if using messaging app infacebook messenger, 4) listening to Indonesian songs, 5) watching Indonesian films, 6) looking for Indonesian news, 7) utilizing social media such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Path and Snapchat as communication media with his friends in Indonesia.

**Keyword:**

Language Maintenance, Immigrant, Endeavor, Social Media



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**INTRODUCTION**

Language maintenance as one of the topics in sociolinguistics is related to three big issues: 1) multilingual community, 2) minority and majority language, 3) language attitude, and 4) language as Identity. In multilingual community, like or dislike, one may choose language that can lead to 'survive' both in occupation setting and in a broad context of community as a means of communication.

Language choice in multilingual community is seemingly inevitable due to the fact that minority and majority language are ther in such a community. Some factors as considerants that may be taken in terms of the choice of language are economic factor, social factors, political factor, demographic factor, attitude and value factors (Holmes, 2001: 58).

Language attitude is very important in terms of the efforts to maintain a language especially in multilingual community. Without having a manifest language attitude, one cannot maintain his/her own language as the native language. Language attitudes are opinions, ideas and prejudices that speakers have with respect to a language. It is often said that in order to learn a language, it often helps to have a positive attitude towards that language. According to Holmes (2001), the positive attitude towards a language may contribute to language maintenance.

Through having the very good and positive attitude and values towards a language, his/her language maintenance seems to be preserved. However, such attitude and values should be accompanied through actual attempts. Related to this, this research is conducted to uncover what kinds of activities done by the Indonesian immigrant living in multilingual community in maintaining his Bahasa Indonesia as his own native language.

## **METHODOLOGY**

The centre of attention in this research is language maintenance, and the method used is descriptive qualitative one. The aim of this method, according to Moleong (2007), is to uncover the facts, phenomena and condition during the research being conducted, and this method as such presents the data as they are. This research uses a single respondent, an Indonesian immigrant living in Norway. He is a university graduate from one of the popular and reputable universities in Indonesia. Soon after his graduation, in 2011 through 2013, he continues his study, taking Master in Petroleum Engineering at Norwegian University of Science and Technology. After finishing his study, he works there until now. Still from Moleong (2007), it is not necessary for this type of research to have more respondents. In line with this, Alwasilah (2003: 72) explains that qualitative research allows researchers to have one respondent only. He describes in his book "*Pokoknya Kualitatif*" that there is a research with the single respondent, a Japanese student studying in a university in US. The most interesting point to research is that the Japanese student, although he seems not to be fluent in English, he gets high GPA. Hence, a qualitative research can be conducted in spite of a single respondent participating in it. In deed the result of the research cannot be generalized but being deep in nature.

The instruments employed, related to the method used above, are questionnaire and interview using two types of questions: close-ended and open-ended ones. The two instruments are used to complement each other. The close-ended questions are used in the instrument of questionnaire while the open-ended questions are used in the instrument of interview. Collecting data using questionnaire is conducted through email, and collecting data using interview is conducted through social media, *i.e.* skype (chatting and video call), and facetime (video call).

On the basis of the aforementioned method, the author depicts the existing phenomena explicitly including collecting and identifying the data, defining, and explaining the problems naturally (Seliger, 1989: 125), and as carefully and comprehensively as possible (Fraenkel, 1990:11).

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

When we discuss language maintenance, it is inevitable that we also discuss language shift because both are interrelated issues.

### **Language Shift**

Language shift can be understood as the process whereby a community of a speaker of a language shifts to speaking a different language, usually over an extended period of time. In relation to this issue, Holmes (2001) explained that factors affecting language shift cover: economic, political, social, and demographic factors. Economic and political factors involve obtaining work – many people migrate from one country to another only to find a job. It is not merely about economic reasons but may also be political for example, in English dominated countries, people learn English in order to get jobs.

Social factors have close relationship with majority and minority issues. For example, a migrant minority group move to a predominantly monolingual society dominated by one majority group language in all major institutional domains – school, TV, radio, newspaper, government administration, court, work – language shift will be unavoidable unless the community takes active steps to prevent it (Holmes, 2001: 59).

Demographic factors may contribute to the speed of language shift. In urban areas such as industrial zone and silicon valleys are more potential places for language shift to occur compared with rural areas. As an illustration still taken from Holmes (2001), the communities in New Zealand where Maori still survives are relatively inaccessible rural areas, populated almost entirely by Maori people. In these communities there are native speakers who will use the language to talk to each other in their homes and in the streets, as well as formal Maori speech events.

### **Language Maintenance**

The issue on language maintenance can be understood as the situation where a speech community or even a language user consistently use their language in same or all spheres of life amid the dominant language to become the main language.

The concept of language maintenance as one of the topics in Sociolinguistics has close relationship with the prestige of a language-user community. Therefore, this issue cannot be separated each other. Language maintenance functions as the identity of a community so as it will be easy to be recognized. Besides, it works to strengthen the solidarity and brotherhood among members of a community.

Such a condition only happens in a multilingual community. The determinant factor to maintain a (native) language seems to be individual in nature due to having the pride of one's native language. Therefore, language maintenance may be performed to avoid language shift that potentially leads to language loss. Fishman (1972) argued that language maintenance is concerned with relationship between changes or stability in habitual language use, on the one hand, and ongoing psychological, social or cultural processes, on the other hand, when populations differing in language are in contact with each other. Further, Fishman (1972) explained that language maintenance depends on a national ideology in a community in terms of social context at least to anticipate the coming changes in relation to language change.

Language maintenance is used to describe the situation of a speaker, a group of speakers, speech community to consistently use their language in their real lives amid the dominant language (Anne Pauwels dalam Davies, 2004:719).

Sumarsono (2004) argued that language maintenance in a multilingual community will remain in existence if the community has a very positive attitude and a pride of their own language, and also thinks that their own language is their own identity. As an illustration provided by Sumarsono (in Chaer, 2004: 147), since the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Loloan society, located in Bali, with the total population around 3000 people consistently uses the Loloan Malay language instead of the Balinese language. They maintain their own language as the heritage of their ancestors coming from Bugis and Pontianak. There are five reasons why they can successfully maintain their own language:

- 1) Geographically separated from Bali: the Loloan community live in a region which is relatively separated and far from Bali;
- 2) Socially tolerated to use their native language by the majority society (Balinese people): Balinese people do not mind with the native language used by Loloan community although in some respects they sometimes use Balinese language;
- 3) Culturally isolated: Loloan people are resistant to social changes and not accommodative to new ideas due to strong religiosity;
- 4) Highly proud of their own language: their attitude towards their own language is very positive, and they realize that their language is the symbol of their Loloan identity;
- 5) Sustainably studied from one generation to another: they think that not only religion and culture but also native language that is to be transferred continuously.

The illustration above is in line with the notion proposed by Holmes (2001) explaining that having a very positive language attitude help minority language survive amid majority language. In brief, language maintenance is strongly dependent on speech community (language users).

Fishman (1968:76), related to the topics under discussion, explained that there are three issues identified in terms of language maintenance:

- 1) Habit in using one's own language: language must be used in any kinds of communication;
- 2) Psychological, social and cultural stability in the process of changes;
- 3) Language attitude and behavior.

The meaning of language shift, according to Fishman (1964), is that:

“The study of language maintenance and language shift is concerned with relationship between change or stability in habitual language use, on the one hand, and ongoing psychological, social or cultural processes, on the other hand, when populations differing in language are in contact with each other”.

In that notion, language shift and language maintenance have the same concern, focusing on the interrelation between language change and language stability in psychological, social and cultural process.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

As the aforementioned that there are two types of instruments used in this research, questionnaires and interviews. The results of the two instruments are discussed here.

Data obtained through the questionnaires indicated that the respondent has been staying in Norway for over 5 years. The reason why he stayed there for such a long time is to continue his study and work there ever since. The respondent explained that he still masters Indonesian, as his first language, in spite of staying there.

During staying in Norway, he still uses Indonesia as the means of communication in the community of Indonesian immigrants. The existence of this community is very helpful for the respondent as the media to maintain his own native language, Indonesian. He can spend the time joining the community once a month or if the community holds an important programs or events such celebrating religious holiday and the like, or has even informal gathering activities like celebrating birthday, cooking and eating together.

Besides, the respondent explained that he still communicates with his family in Indonesia regularly at least once a week using video call/skype or facetime, and he 'chitchats' even every day through chatting messenger. He added that the respondent uses social media like Facebook, Path, Instagram, Twitter, and Snapchat as the effort of the Indonesian language maintenance. He uses the five kinds of social media to have conversations with his friends in Indonesia. Even not only the Indonesia language but also The Sundanese language (regional language of West Java).

Data taken from interview are used to confirm the data obtained through questionnaires. The answers of the respondent during conducting the interview strengthened and supported the answers given in the questionnaires. The results of the interviews showed that the respondent used social media as the media for communicating both with his family and with his friends. The social media used to communicate, to have small talks (chitchating) to share information *etc.* are Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Path, Snapchat and Facetime. All the media, directly or indirectly, are used to maintain his own native language, the Indonesian language (*Bahasa Indonesia*). Through the social media used, he frequently communicates face-to-face with his family at least once a week using Skype (video call) dan Facetime, and even almost every day chitchats using messenger app.

Therefore, by doing such ways, he realized, although he lives in multilingual community in Norway, that he can manage to master his first language (*Bahasa Indonesia*), and in turns, he can maintain *Bahasa Indonesia* as his first language. He also gave further explanation that to maintain his native language (the Indonesian language), he joined the Indonesian immigrant community in which he can attend the monthly-meeting so as he can gather together, and indeed the language used is Indonesian during the meeting. The various activities are offered by the community ranging from formal, less formal and informal ones, for instances, holding religious activities, having birthday celebration, cooking and having meals together, and many more. Those kinds of social-gathering activities may be conducted in a house of a member of the community.

Besides, to attract his friends' or his family's comments, he used Instagram, for example, to upload or to post some photos. By this way, he can discuss and share opinions using *Bahasa Indonesia*. On top of that, he also has annual program, home-coming (in Bahasa Indonesia it is called *Pulang Kampung*). This *Pulang Kampung* is done when *Idul Fitri* Holiday is coming. It is in line with the notions of Holmes (2001:2-64) dan Romaine (2000:44-67), saying that one of the influential factors in maintaining a native language is frequently communicating with family in home country.

There is another activity explained, during conducting the interview, namely leisure activities. These activities involve watching Indonesian films/news, and listening to Indonesian songs through multimode sources. Such leisure activities can help the respondent maintain his native language – *Bahasa Indonesia*.

The discussion above using the data taking from both questionnaires and interviews indicated that social media play very important roles in maintaining a native language as a minority language

amid multilingual community. The data taken from the two types of instruments strengthen each other. In other words, there is no contradictory views or ideas in them.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **Conclusions**

After conducting the analysis and discussion, the conclusion can be drawn that the activities conducted by the immigrant as the effort to maintain his native language (Indonesian) cover: 1) Joining the community of Indonesian immigrant in which he can do many activities like gathering together, having meals and travelling together, and discussing various topics including religious ones, 2) periodically-homecoming through which he can visit his family, relatives and friends such as during the *Idul Fitri* Holiday, 3) communicating with the family (once a week) in Indonesia through telephone or any other media like skype (video call) and facetime, even almost every day if using messaging app in facebook messenger, 4) listening to Indonesian songs, 5) watching Indonesian films, 6) looking for Indonesian news, 7) utilizing social media such as *Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Path* and *Snapchat* as communication media with his friends in Indonesia.

### **Recommendations**

The topic under discussion may very possibly be developed by those who are interested in Sociolinguistics particularly in multilingual speech communities. In other words, there may be some niches to be the similar topic of research. Practical recommendations related to the language maintenance as the topic in this article are that to maintain a native language as the minority language in a multilingual speech community needs to have strong language awareness and language attitude which must be internalized and implemented in the real context. In so doing, the sustainability of language will well be maintained.

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