

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 The Background of the Study

Naturally, both human beings and their languages are as one unit that cannot be separated. A language is so important that it is supposed to be a mean of communication in a society. The nature may give opportunity for both of them to increase or to decrease in their important performance in the society. The language may use a concept system which donates the community to interpret reality. The complexity of the language may bring in different views. The views may be different so the different views on the reality can bring in different perceptions from many aspects of the lives in the society. Many aspects of the lives in the society have been in progress when the society still does their daily activities, includes the language use in the society. Progress in understanding of many aspects of the lives especially the language use may result in the complexity of reality because the developing linguistic diversity which has given the characterization of the human beings. Languages are supposed to be the important part of lives in the society which transmits the values. Every language which is used in the society shows the important thing which makes the people understand the values. UNESCO Ad Hoc Expert Group on Endangered Language (2003:3) defines diversity language is essential to the human heritage. Each and every language embodies the unique cultural wisdom of a people. The loss of any language is thus a loss for all humanity. So, language retainability is necessary to do in order to avoid losing of any languages and also humanity. Moreover, Goa (2006:58) states that successful intercultural communication is a matter of highest importance if human kind and society are to survive. In addition, Jandt (2003:40) states

that language is a way of marking cultural identity. Language differs, on the other hand, from other phenomena in that it is used to refer to other phenomena and has usually to be used to refer beyond itself.

As long as a society still uses their languages as their prestige and heritage from one generation to another so the language also still survives in their lives. Consequently, a language will be in danger when the community does not use their own language. It is due to the factors that occur in a certain community. It possibly happens to bring some issues on the language endangerment to some communities and to their languages, even local languages in Indonesia. Darhemi (2002) adds that the issue is devoted to problems of endangered languages, particularly endangered languages spoken by minorities, focusing on the sociolinguistic study of the causes, circumstance and result of the endangerment, and other structural and social process related to endangered languages and to their survival. Also Koenig (2002) states that it attempts to analyze the causes, circumstances and results of language endangerment as well as the social conditions and effects of political intervention in favor of survival of endangered minority languages.

Some language experts report that ten local minority languages in the eastern part of Indonesia have been in danger lately. It is similar to what Ethnologue, Lewis and Simon in Obiero (2010: 201) state that of the 6,909 living languages now listed in Ethnologue, 457 are identified as Nearly Extinct, a category which represents a severe level of endangerment.

There is no guarantee that all languages in the world can survive along with their speakers. The expanding era of this globalization, with a small group of nations dominating the scene, has got an adverse effect on the language itself of a community.

The positive side of the effect, such as: good employment, standard of living, and the negative one of the effect, such as: war, politics, catastrophe, human's interference in some cases, have given conspiracy in making some groups socio-economically dominant, and also as a consequence promoted the cultures and languages of these groups over those of other, non dominant groups, Hudson (1985: 81) defines that culture as the kind of knowledge which we learn from other people, either by direct instruction or by watching their behavior. And Crystal (2003); Nettle and Romaine (2000), to such extent that the existence of a large number of smaller languages is endangered. In addition, Deumert (2003: 461) stated that case studies of the interactions of these social and political ideologies in a given society, and, in particular, their relationship.

With the exception of the contributions in Brenzinger in Mufwene (1998: 1), which deal mostly with the expansion of some African languages at that expense of other indigenous languages, most of these publications decry the powerlessness of the colonized populations and the fact that colonization has left them no choice but allegedly to lose pride in, and shift from, their ancestral languages.

As the people of Acehnese who use the language of Acehnese have become decreased in number at the eastern coast of Serdang Bedagai regency, this condition makes that the Acehnese language in there has become rarely heard to be spoken to or even rarely used in that community. Crystal (2003: 12) stated that the presumption is that any language which has a very small number of speakers is bound to be trouble, and common sense tells us that this should be the case.

The condition, is perhaps, only in places where the circumstances are especially favorable could such a language survive. So, notwithstanding the exceptions, most people

would accept that a language spoken by less than 100 (one hundred) is in a very dangerous situation. They would then probably think in terms of 'sliding scale' whereby languages with less than 500 (five hundred) would be somewhat less endangered, those with 1000 (one thousand) even less so, and so on. In addition, Lauder (2012) the Professor of Linguistic expert from University of Indonesia said that the speakers of a language are less than 1.000 it is regarded as the classification of endangered language due to it will be difficult to be maintained if the speakers of the language are very few. What is unclear is the level at which would stop automatically thinking in terms of danger. Yamamoto in Crystal (2000: 14) also recognizes this, 'the number of speakers is an immediate index for its endangered situation'.

Dendy Sugono's comments on the National Linguistic Congress XII in Solo (September 4, 2007) beside that there have been 33 indigenous local languages becomes endangered (threatened). This is as the result from the researches of some academic in any universities. Also Asim Gunarwan, (2007), the Professor of Indonesia University, adds that the endangered (threatened) languages happen not only to the minority local languages which the language users are in small number but also happen to majority local languages, such as: Javanese, Balinese, and Malay. He says that it happens due to the mastery of the local languages are not considered given any advantages. Contrary to mastering foreign languages (second languages) where the people who master will obtain such a kind of advantages or benefits. Nevertheless, he adds that maintaining the existence of local threatened languages is a must because those things are much related with the culture preservation. If the local languages become extinct, so the culture will also be gone.

Acehnese language is one of the vernacular languages at the eastern coast of Serdang Bedagai regency; the local Acehnese language is rarely heard in one Acehnese family's life, typically among the Acehnese children as they are in the group of a society, such as: in neighborhood, markets, hospitals, banks, schools, offices, and other common places. The local Malay language or Javanese language, as the dominant vernacular languages in that place occur as the daily languages for many people of different backgrounds, includes the Acehnese children who may shift their language due to some typical reasons. This language phenomenon is not regarded as something which means usual matter in a daily life. It really becomes a serious matter or a problem for those who know that language is an identity for any people, typically for Acehnese people and even to their generations as the heir of their own language.

To avoid language shift or even language endangerment it is essential that language maintenance or language revitalization be applied soon. Language must be retained and maintained because language is as a mean of language users' identity. Acehnese language is a symbol identity for Acehnese people. As it is stated by Holmes (2001:63) where language is considered as important symbol of a minority group's identity, the language is likely to be maintained longer.

The efforts in retaining a language in order not to shift which may possibly cause language endangerment are not easy to do these days. It is due to the language contact because the high of the mobilization of the people. That's why it is needed such good of strategy to solve it. The strategy is the policy which will be given to the conceptual decision or political decision, to solve the language problem at the national level so that it

can be retained or revitalized. A language together with its speakers may exist in a community because of its importance.

### **1.2 The Problems of the Study**

Based on the background of the study, the problems to be investigated are formulated as follow:

1. To what extent is the retainability of the Acehese speakers to their language?
2. How is the attitude of Acehese speakers to maintain Acehese language at the eastern coast of Serdang Bedagai regency?
3. Why do the Acehese speakers have such attitude to their language?

### **1.3 The Objectives of the Study**

The objectives of the study are stated clearly as follow:

- 1) to find out to what extent is the retainability of the Acehese speakers at the eastern coast of Serdang Bedagai regency,
- 2) to find out how the attitude of the Acehese speakers at the eastern coast of Serdang Bedagai regency,
- 3) to explore why Acehese speakers have such an attitude to their language.

### **1.4 The Scope of the Study**

The scope of this study is to find out the attitude of Acehese Speakers on the language retainability of Acehese at the eastern coast of Serdang Bedagai regency. The language use is in Acehese speakers' (parents') domain. Each domain will be divided

into daily use and special use language. Daily use language is the language for communication among them for their daily needs while special use language is the one for special needs other than daily needs such as talking on a certain event.

### **1.5 The Significance of the Study**

The findings of the study are practically expected to be useful as an input for the speakers of Acehnese to be aware of their language in multilingualism situation.

Theoretically, the findings will be a real fact of present situation of the Acehnese speakers in Serdang Bedagai regency especially in the eastern coast of it. The findings will be a further study of many cases to such extent for the language planners who are interested in this study of language retainability. Such of the findings will be useful as an inspiration for the linguists or language planners to set up and to be aware of the condition of the language. In addition, the findings will be more useful for the linguists and language planners to know the disadvantages of the language users' attitudes to their own language which should be retained.

Practically, the findings will be as an input for the Acehnese speakers to be aware of their language in multi dimension. Every man uses a language to interact and communicate in the daily lives. So, without language people cannot communicate and interact each other. Acehnese language is one of vernacular languages, which is very important part for the Acehnese people and other people so that it is essential to make the language live longer and it is also important that the language be retained and revitalized.

## 1.6 The Clarification of Terminologies

### 1) Attitudes

In Language Planning, attitudes to a language have two categories, namely: positive attitude and negative one to a language. Thus, someone's attitudes to his or her language may influence the condition of the language. When a group of language speakers of a community has positive or good attitudes to their language, the language may exist, survive, increase, and it may be used longer in daily communication and interaction. On the contrary, the community who has negative or bad attitudes to their language, the language may decrease, shifted, unsafe, not be used any longer and so forth. In this case, the researcher has made the limitation of the attitudes of parents are defined as how are the parents' behavior towards their language of Acehnese at the eastern coast of Serdang Bedagai regency.

### 2) Retainability

In one hand, the terminologies of *retainability* and *maintainability* are similar in their meaning and purpose, that the process of retaining or maintaining of a language. According to Trask (1998:126) he states that language maintenance or language retainability is the continued use of a language by its speakers, especially in circumstances in which it is under pressure from another language; the opposite of language loss or language death.

In the other hand, the terminologies of retainability and maintainability are a little bit difference. According to Saragih (2013), the maintainability of a language is the process of revitalize a language in its own area, for example the process of maintaining Acehnese language in Aceh or Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam (NAD) is called

maintainability. But the process of maintaining Acehnese language in Serdang Bedagai regency or in other places (out side of Aceh or Nanggroe Aceh Darussalam) is called retainability. So to avoing misunderstanding, the terminologies of *retainability* and *maintainability* have the same meaning and purpose but have different place of the language itself.

