

Language Maintenance of Hokkien Among Chinese Speakers in Stabat

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Abstract—Language maintenance refers to the situation where speech community continue to use its vernacular language. This study deals with the language maintenance of Hokkien among Chinese speakers in Stabat. This study is aimed to (1) identify the factor, to find out the way, and to find out the reason of Hokkien Chinese speakers maintain their language. This study was conducted in qualitative research design. The participants of this study were 40 Hokkien Chinese people who consists of 20 parents and 20 childrens. The data was collected by giving 20 questionnaire and 10 questions in interview to get information or data. The data was analyzed by using Interactive Model by Miles, Hubberman and Saldana. The results of the research found that the factors which supported Hokkien Chinese maintenance in Stabat such as left together and see each other frequently. The strategies or the way of maintain their language by habitually used Hokkien language in daily communication, living together family member and relatives made Hokkien language as their home language, and the reason of the Chinese maintain the Hokkien language because they proud of their language, to express their identity as Hokkien Chinese ethnic, and so on.

Keywords—language maintenance, hokkien, chinese

I. INTRODUCTION

The existence of language cannot be separated from human life. Every language represents the temple in which the speaker's soul is his/her devotee [1]. It seems that everything related to human life in the society involves language because through the language the interaction among tribes, ethnic groups, and religions can happen. In Indonesia, there are so many languages because it has so many ethnic groups. The competition among languages happens in Indonesia. Based on the data of UNESCO in the year of 2001, there are 6.900 languages in the world. 2.500 of them are extincting. UNESCO says that Indonesia is a country which has multi varieties of languages, but it is also facing a very big danger of language shift. Indonesia takes the third position with 147 shifting languages. 169 ethnic languages of 742 in Indonesia are facing danger of extinction because their speakers are less than 500 people. Those data show that the language shift happens in Indonesia.

Language shift is often used to refer to change at a community level and the terms language loss or non-acquisition of language are used in reference to an

individual's declining or infrequent use of a group's original language with concurrent increased or dominant use of another more widely used language [2]. If the language shift cannot be stopped, the minority language will lose.

Language is one of ethnic identity symbols. In keeping the existence of ethnic identity needs language maintenance. Language maintenance is generally applied to individuals or a community of speakers continuing to use their language in a situation of language contact, i.e where there is competition from one or more languages to be the sole language used in particular domains or situations [3]. So, maintaining the language is important. Where the language is considered as an important symbol of group's identity, it is likely to be maintained longer [4].

Chinese Indonesian account for about 3% of the population but they are influential, controlling most of the country's wealth and commerce. Nowadays, vernaculars in Indonesia as mother tongue face a challenge against the existence of Indonesia language and foreign language. Many vernaculars in Indonesia shifted even endangered. Chinese-Indonesians are ethnic Chinese people living in Indonesia, as a result of centuries of overseas Chinese migration. The Chinese-Indonesian experience in Indonesia is one of extremes. On the one hand, they have made it their home and it's been a land of plenty as many have become fabulously rich, mostly in business.

Chinese began inhabiting Indonesia since the 15th century with significant waves in 18th and 19th century. Mostly concentrated in urban Java, Sumatra, and Kalimantan cities with significant numbers in Jakarta, North Sumatra, Riau Island, Bangka Belitung Island, and West Kalimantan. Stabat districts precisely in the regency of Langkat is a region in north sumatera, there is also chinese population inside. Based on the book 'Kecamatan Stabat Dalam Angka 2016' found that there are 86.217 populations in stabat with so many ethnics. While, there are 2.714 populations of Chinese ethnics in Stabat.

The researcher in this study found it is important to conduct a study about language maintenance of Hokkien among Chinese speakers in Stabat. The problem of this research are: (1) what factors do effect the maintenance of Hokkien language in Stabat?, (2) how do the speakers of Hokkien Chinese maintain their native language?, (3) why do

the speakers of Hokkien Chinese maintain their native language?. In line with the research about Language Shift and Maintenance Among Chinese Community in Surabaya: A case of Non-Migrant Community state that English is an international language where people around the world know English. The study has three goals: (1) to describe the language is used by Chinese family in Surabaya, (2) to find out the factors that contributes Chinese family in choosing English, (3) to identify how do the Chinese family maintain the Indonesian [5].

The reason why the researcher chooses language maintenance as the topic of the study because Indonesia consists of many ethnics and languages. Furthermore, the researcher chooses Stabat as a location of the research because of Stabat is a city which consists of multicultural ethnic who live in Stabat. There are lots of Hokkien Chinese migrants settle and intermarriage in Stabat. Hokkien as the language of Chinese use as the language of business. Islam is the majority religion in Stabat, Christian is also a part of the population, Buddhism or Tionghoa widely adopted by the community of Chinese. Stabat city is rich of cultural heritage and ethnic differences, however, people still live in peace and have a strong religious tolerance.

Based on the reason previously, this research is focused on language maintenance of Hokkien among Chinese speakers in Stabat. The researcher interests to find out the factors affecting Hokkien language maintenance in Stabat. How they maintain their language and their reason why they use or maintain Hokkien language.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A. Language Maintenance

Language maintenance refers to if the minority language is retain by its traditional speech community without the intervention of language planning activities [6]. It describes the situation where speech community retain the use of their languages without intervention of language planning despite competition from the locally and globally dominant languages. Language maintenance describe as three generation process. The first generation still used vernacular language at home though they know another language, the second generation use vernacular language at home but shift toward another language, and the third generation, the vernacular language disappears totally.

Language maintenance and language shift are the result of language choice for a long time [7]. Language shift show that there are some languages which are really left by the community of language users. This means that when language shift occurs, the members of the language collectively refers to use the new language rather than the old language that they used before. In contrast, in maintaining the language, the language users collectively decide to continue to use their language or to use their vernacular.

Language maintenance is preservation of the language which is the language used by a group's native language as a

first or second language where pressures threaten or a cause a decline in the status of the language. Status of language is interview with language prestige and language function. Language status is the position or standing of a language. The effect of language maintenance programs can be extremely positive for threate cultural group.

When a community does not maintain its language, but gradually adopts another one, we talk about language shift while language maintenance refers to a situation where members of a community try to keep the language they are using [8].

All local languages should be maintained, because the language is a cultural symbol. A cultural seem clear because the language important task for all generation of culture. It can be spread if the generation has loyalty to the local language. There are many factors that influence maintenance of a language such as the use of language in family domain, education, religion, neighborhood, the use of language as an official language, the language used in media, education and how many speakers of the language live in the same area.

There are some other factors that can maintain a language [4]:

1. Living together and see each other frequently. This activity support to use their heritage language. This activity helps them to maintain their language, of course they will use their language as they have the same with vernacular language.
2. Intramarriages helps maintain the language of the minority. Someone who marriage with same tribe help to maintain language, because they have same language and culture, so they have high prestige towards their language and culture.
3. The attitude of the speakers. This deal with the culture value, whether the group consider their language and culture needs to be maintained or not. Language maintenance occur when the speakers have high prestige to their culture identity.

There are efforts that can be done in order to maintain a language [4]:

1. The use of minority language in education, e.g bilingual education programmes, using or teaching the minority language in school, in pre-school, and in after-school programmes.
2. Support by the law and administration, e.g the right to use the language in court, the House of Assembly, in dealing with government officials, etc.
3. The use of the language in places of worship, e.g for services, sermons, hymns, chants.
4. Use of and support for the language in the media, e.g TV programmes, radio programmes, newspapers, magazines.

B. Hokkien Language

The An ethnic group was defined as a group that regards itself or is regard by other as a distinct community by virtue

of certain characteristics that will help to distinguish the group from the surrounding community. Chinese is one of many ethnics in Indonesia. Chinese began inhabiting Indonesia since the 15th century with significant waves in 18th and 19th century. Mostly concentrated in urban Java, Sumatra, and Kalimantan cities with significant numbers in Jakarta, North Sumatra, Riau Island, Bangka Belitung Island, and West Kalimantan. Stabat which is a region in north sumatera, there is also chinese population inside. Based on the book 'Kecamatan Stabat Dalam Angka 2016' found that there are 86.217 populations in stabat with so many ethnics. While, there are 2.714 populations of Chinese ethnics in Stabat which consists of 1.313 male and 1.401 female. They are Hokkien Chinese ethnic. They use Hokkien language for communicating each other.

Hokkien is a Southern Min dialect group spoken throughout Southern part of Fujian Province in Southeastern China, Taiwan and Southeast Asia, and by other overseas Chinese. Hokkien originated in southern Fujian, the Min-speaking province. It is the mainstream variety of Southern Min. Hokkien historically served as the lingua franca amongst overseas Chinese communities of all dialects and subgroups in Southeast Asia, and remains today as the most spoken variety of Chinese in the region, including in Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Philippines and some parts of Indochina (particularly Thailand, Laos and Cambodia).

III. METHOD

This research is conducted by qualitative research. Qualitative research is a system of inquiry which seeks to build a holistic, largely narrative, description to inform the researcher's understanding of a social or cultural phenomenon. Qualitative research consists of two; case study and multiple site study. This research is conducted as a case study. A case study is the preferred strategy when "how, why, and what" questions are being asked, or when the investigator has little control over events, or when the focus is on a contemporary phenomenon within a real life context [9]. The participants of this study were 40 Hokkien Chinese which consists of male and female and divided into two groups. First group was 20 parents at the age of 30-50 years old (as second generation), and then the second group was 20 childrens at the age 7-14 years old (as a third generation). The participants of Hokkien Chinese in this study as source of data. In this study, the instruments which needed were questionnaire sheet, interview guideline, and tape recorder. And the technique of data collection was questionnaire and interview technique. There were 20 questionnaires and 10 questions for interviewing the participants. The following steps is applied to analyze the data. In this research used interactive model for analyzing the data by Miles, Huberman, and Saldana. There are four steps in analyzing the data. They are data collection, data condensation, data display, and data conclusion or conclusion drawing [10].

IV. FINDINGS

The data used in this research are transcription of interview and answer sheet of questionnaire. After analyzing the data, the researcher found some factors which support the Hokkien Chinese people in maintaining Hokkien language in Stabat.

a. *The Factors which Support Chinese Speakers Maintain the Hokkien Language in Stabat were:*

1. Using language in family domain

Family was played important role by children to maintain their language, because family is the first unit to transmitted the language. The participants in Stabat speak Hokkien language at home, as showed in the table below:

TABLE I. LANGUAGE USE OF HOKKIEN IN FAMILY DOMAIN

| Participants | Can Speak Hokkien | | Do Not Speak Hokkien | | Total Percentage |
|--------------|-------------------|------------|----------------------|------------|------------------|
| | Frekuensi | Persentase | Frekuensi | Persentase | |
| 40 | 37 | 92.5% | 3 | 7.5% | 100% |

Based on the displayed above, there were 92.5% of 40 participants who speak Hokkien language at their home. Actually parents had a big role in children language acquisition, even it was stated that basic level of the language maintenance was family domain.

2. Using language in neighborhood domain

The one of factor concerning with the maintenance of a certain language is the need for communication with other family such as neighborhoods.

TABLE II. LANGUAGE USE OF HOKKIEN IN NEIGHBORHOOD DOMAIN

| Participants | Using Language in Neighborhood Domain | | | | Total Percentage |
|--------------|---------------------------------------|------------|-----------|------------|------------------|
| | SCHL | | SCHLI | | |
| | Frekuensi | Persentase | Frekuensi | Persentase | |
| 40 | 32 | 80% | 8 | 20% | 100% |

Note: SCHL: speak Chinese Hokkien language
SCHLI: Speak Chinese Hokkien language and Indonesian language.

From the data displayed, it could be seen that 80% from 40 participants used Hokkien language to communicate with neighbor, but sometimes 20% used Indonesia language.

3. Living together and see each other frequently

Living together is one of strategy how to maintain a language. Living together and see each other frequently by Hokkien Chinese people could built up a high socialization and make close relationship among them by using Hokkien language.

TABLE III. THE SPEAKERS WHO LIVE IN DOMINANT

| Participants | Living Together and See Each Other Frequently | | | | Total Percentage |
|--------------|---|------------|----------------------|------------|------------------|
| | Speak Hokkien | | Do not Speak Hokkien | | |
| | Frekuensi | Persentase | Frekuensi | Persentase | |
| 40 | 35 | 87.5% | 5 | 12.5% | 100% |

From the data display above, it could be seen that 35 participants living together or living in area dominated by Chinese. They speak Hokkien language when they communicate to each other.

4. Using language in religion domain

Using Hokkien language in religion domain was significant factor which affected Chinese to maintain their language. All the people need the religion because it guides to the right way.

TABLE IV. LANGUAGE USE OF HOKKIEN LANGUAGE IN RELIGION DOMAIN

| Participants | Language Use in Religion Domain | | | | Total Percentage |
|--------------|---------------------------------|------------|------------------------|------------|------------------|
| | Speak Hokkien | | Speak Bahasa Indonesia | | |
| | Frekuensi | Persentase | Frekuensi | Persentase | |
| 40 | 36 | 90% | 4 | 10% | 100% |

From the table above could be seen that 36 participants or 90% who can speak Hokkien language used Hokkien language in religion domain.

b. Strategies or the Way of Maintaining the Hokkien Language Among Chinese Speakers in Stabat

Language could maintain if the speakers use the language particularly. The way of Chinese speakers in Stabat to maintain their language were:

1. Consider Hokkien language as symbol identity
2. Consider Hokkien language as proudness
3. To keep that language to next generation
4. Speak Hokkien in daily communication

The way of Chinese speakers in Stabat maintain the Hokkien language is by habitually using Hokkien language in daily conversation. Based on the Joshua Fishman stated that one of the stage process to effort for keeping the threatened language exist is by habitually using language. In Stabat, the Chinese speakers use vernacular language, they spoke Hokkien when they communicate to each other. This one of the strategy for all participant specially parent and children to maintain Hokkien language.

c. The Reasons of Chinese Speakers in Stabat Maintain Their Hokkien Language

In this study the researcher got several reasons of Chinese speakers in maintaing the Hokkien language. In general, the reasons were:

1. To express their identity as Chinese ethnic
2. To achieve self pride as a Chinese

3. To help their community to perserve their language
4. To show the uniqueness and diversity compared to another ethnic.

They used Hokkien language to increase or express their identity to other ethnic and showed their uniqueness of their language. As the following statement in interview as subject 4:

“ya...kami bicara bahasa Cina Hokkien agar orang lain tau identitas suku kami”. Thus, the attitude Hokkien Chinese speakers toward their vernacular support them in maintaining their language. The maintenance of Hokkien language was maintained by culture, because every culture activity needs to use a language.

V. DISCUSSION

Language maintenance is an effort in keeping the language alive by using that language continually is facing the competition among other languages in society. From the finding above, it can be concluded that this research had different findings with the previous research on Language Shift and Maintenance Among Chinese Community in Surabaya: A case of Non-Migrant Community state that English is an international language where people around the world know English [5]. The findings are different because this study conducted in different place.

There are four factors which affect Chinese speakers in Stabat for maintaining Hokkien language such as living together and see each other frequently, use of the language in family domain, use the language in neighborhood domain, and use the language in religion domain.

In maintaining Hokkien Chinese language in Stabat, there are some strategies or way that conduct by Chinese speakers. The way of Chinese speakers in Stabat maintain the Hokkien language is by habitually using Hokkien language in daily conversation. In Stabat, the Chinese speakers use vernacular language, they spoke Hokkien when they communicate to each other. This one of the strategy for all participant specially parent and children to maintain Hokkien language.

Furthermore, the Chinese speaker in Stabat have the reasons in maintaining Hokkien language. They maintain their language as vernacular language because they proud use Hokkien language. By using their Hokkien language in their daily communication, it showed their identity as Chinese ethnic. They keep their language to next generations in order to their language can be used to their next generations. When the language see as an important symbol of ethnic identity, it is generally maintain longer [4].

VI. CONCLUSION

Based on the finding and discussion of the research data, it can be concluded that the factors affecting Chinese speakers in Stabat maintain Hokkien language are: living together and see each other frequently, use of the language in family domain, use of the language in neighborhood domain, and use of the language in religion domain. The main way of Chinese

speakers in Stabat maintain the Hokkien language is by habitually using Hokkien language in daily conversation. Proud being Chinese and to show their identity as Hokkien Chinese people are the reasons Chinese people maintain Hokkien language.

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