

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 The Background of the Study

The existence of language cannot be separated from human life. According to Holmes (2002), every language represents the temple in which the speaker's soul is his/her devotee. 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 extinct. 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. Based on the data of UNESCO, almost 200 languages do not exist any longer after three generations, because they lost their speakers. 900 languages in the world are in danger of extinction nowadays. 199 languages in the world are mastered by less than a dozen of speakers; for example Lengilu language in East Borneo, Indonesia used by only 4 people. There are other 178 languages in the world which are extinct, because they are used by 10 to 150 people only. Based on the record of UNESCO, India is at the first rank in facing language shift. There are 196 shifting languages in India now. America takes the second position with 192 shifting languages. 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 (UNESCO, 2001).

The data above are supported by the data of language shift which is happened in Indonesia from 1980-2008. In comparing the data from 1980 and 1990, the number of Javanese users in daily conversation decreased until 16.3 percent, whereas the number of Indonesian users in daily conversation increased until 38.9 percent. The grandparents who use Indonesian are 11 percent. Parents who use Indonesian to their children are 13 percent. Children who speak Indonesian to their friends are 65 percent. In 1998, Indonesian users increased 65 percent. From 2001 to 2007, the Indonesian users increased until 87 percent. Grandparents who speak Indonesian are 15 percent and who speak Javanese language are 2 percent. Parents who speak Indonesian are 20 percent and who speak Javanese are 7 percent. Children who speak Indonesian are 65 percent and who speak Javanese are 20 percent. In 2008, the number of Indonesians who can speak their national language well is over 90 percent. Grandparents who speak Indonesian are 42 percent. Parents who speak Indonesian are 46 percent and children who speak Indonesian are 75 percent (Ahmad in Gunawan 2008).

Those data show that the language shift happens in Indonesia continually. Weinreich (1968) defines that languageshift 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. If the language shift cannot be stopped, the minority language will lose. Language is one of ethnic identity symbols. It means Indonesia will lose one of its ethnic identities. 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 (Pauwels,

2005). So, maintaining the language is important. It is supported by Holmes (2002), he said that Language as a symbol of ethnic identity which must be maintained.

The previous researcher, Simon Musgrave from Monash University, discussed language shift and language maintenance in Indonesia. But the explanation which is given by him is not clear enough. That is the first reason why the writer chooses language maintenance as her topic. And the second reason, Indonesia consists of many ethnics and languages. So, there is a tendency to be happened inter-ethnic marriage. Inter-ethnic marriages are a combination of two people from different ethnics and languages also. It means that there are two languages exist in inter-ethnic marriage couples. The existence of two languages means the competition between two languages. So, the writer is interested in investigating this phenomenon. It is also because the writer's parents are inter-ethnic couple: Father is Javanese and mother is Batak. In fact, in communication, sometimes the writer's parents use Indonesia language and sometimes they use Batak language, they never use Javanese. That is why the writer is interested in investigating language maintenance in inter-ethnic couples.

## 1.2 The Problems of the Study

Based on the above background of the study, the problems of the study are formulated as follows:

1. What is the dominant factor affecting language maintenance in inter-ethnic couples?
2. How do inter-ethnic couples maintain their vernacular?
3. Why do they choose that way?

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

Based on the problems of the study above, the objectives of this study are:

1. to find out the factors for language maintenance in inter-ethnic couples in Medan.
2. to find out the process of language maintenance in inter-ethnic couples.
3. to find out the reason for their ways in maintaining language.

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

This study only focuses on the language maintenance in inter-ethnic couples in Medan. It will be conducted only for Javanese (husband)-Batak (wife) and Batak (husband)-Javanese (wife).

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

The findings of this study are expected to be significantly relevant theoretically and practically. Theoretically, the research findings are expected to enrich the theories of language maintenance. This study considers being useful initially to provide the information of language maintenance in inter-ethnic couples. Consequently, it will give better understanding and new insight of language maintenance study. This contribution will in turn give tentative framework for a comprehensive analysis of language maintenance.

Practically, since the research focuses on language maintenance in inter-ethnic couples, hopefully it is useful for teachers and lecturers of sociolinguistics to apply the language maintenance, specifically to sociolinguistics students either University or high school. It helps them to know the process of vernacular language maintains in inter-ethnic couples, to know the reason for ways which are chosen by inter-ethnic couples in maintaining their vernacular language, to show the factor which influence language maintenance dominantly in inter-ethnic couples and also to look for some efforts to prevent language shift in inter-ethnic couples.

