

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### 1.1 Background of the Study

Context may influence the language use when people communicate one with another. In Indonesia context where several languages may be used, the one with whom we communicate can influence which language is chosen as the tool to fulfill the purpose. It is in line with Edwards (1985, cited in Katubi 2006) who said that language choice can function as an indication to perception of situation.

For example, a person who migrates to Medan from Padang will decide to use *Bahasa Indonesia* with local people which functions as *lingua franca* since s/he perceives the situation is inappropriate to use her/his own ethnic language. The context of Indonesia as said above is usually known as multilingual (Tanner 1967). Multilingual communities are as “one of the results of migration” (Spolsky 1998, p. 51). One of cities known as multilingual city is Medan. There are several ethnics including Rohingya ethnic who is an ethnic from Burma, Myanmar. They have Rohingya language as their native language.

In multilingual society, language choice occurs (Fasold 1984). Based on Greenfield’s research (1992, cited in Fasold 1984), there are three factors, namely interlocutors, settings, and topics, which affect the language choice used by speakers. For example, Rohingya people in Medan might have different language choice to speak to different people. Rohingya people may use Indonesian with their Indonesia neighbour and speak Rohingya language to their Rohingya neighbour.

Actually, people usually choose a language which is easier to use and more understandable by most of people (Holmes 2001). Having experience with a language or languages make people have an attitude toward it. Attitude, in general, is defined as a mental state of willingness, organized through experience (Allport, cited in Pickens 2005). Some Rohingya people may perceive a language more positive than another language. Since what an individual interprets or perceives may be substantially different each other, a closer look at the issues that help to investigate individual's response toward language, such as language attitude is needed. In addition to language attitude, language use is another important factor that impacts language shift and maintenance toward a particular language in a speech community (Gardner 1985, Holmes & Harlow 1991, cited in Kuncha and Bathula 2004; Fasold 1984; Holmes 2001).

Attitudes are mental phenomenon which cannot be examined and cannot be observed directly, but they are manifested in people's action or reaction (Baker, 1992). People's attitude towards language can be seen from how they think about the language, how they use the language, with whom, where and how often they use it. Language attitude studies will determine that people's attitude towards language might be positive or negative (Chalak & Kassaian, 2010)

Related to the positive or negative attitudes, Garvin & Mathiot (1968) states that the language attitude contains at least three characteristics, namely: (1) language loyalty, which motivates a society of language speakers maintain their language, and if it is needed, they will protect their language from other languages,, influences; (2) language pride, which motivates people to make their

language as their identity and the unity of society; and (3) awareness of the norms, which motivates the speakers to use the language carefully and politely and this is the biggest factor which contributes to the activity of using the language (cited in Masruddin, 2014). Speakers with these three characteristics towards language are categorized as people who have positive attitudes, but if they do not have or less of these characteristics are categorized as people who have negative attitudes.

There are many writers who investigate language attitude in terms of language maintenance and shift. However, since the study is included in social and psychology field, it is still essential to broaden the study in sociolinguistic context pertaining to the issue.

Many studies recently had been conducted that support this view empirically. Related to the research that have been done by Zhang (2008) found Chinese parents generally have positive attitude towards their native language. Kuncha and Batula (2013) found the new immigrant community in New Zealand had negative attitudes towards their ethnic language.

Considering the importance of this study, as a contribution to sociolinguistics study in Indonesia, it is essential to investigate regional language which concerns language attitude and this study is a project to discover the attitude of Rohingya people toward Rohingya language in such a multilingual context at Medan.

Rohingya people who fled their country for many years live in refugee detention in Medan. They fled from their country due to ethnicity conflict in Rakhine state Myanmar. They are detained in number one immigration detention

at Jl. Jamin Ginting precisely at Beraspati hotel. In this detention house there are 144 Rohingya people they are children, teenagers and adult. Some of the children and teenager are entered to the school. These refugees expected help and reach out from UN which is distributed from IOM and UNHCR. The refugees got meal three times a day, besides they also obtain their daily life's needs.

In detention center the Rohingya people are educated by IOM that provides teachers to teach Rohingya people. Many of them cannot read and write and also illiterate. Having been able to speak and write Bahasa Indonesia, Rohingya people also get additional knowledge namely the skill of English which is regarded beneficial to the Rohingya future.

Rohingya people in a certain condition get influenced from the multilingual people. Regardless of their domination who live in detention center. Nevertheless Rohingya people tend to speak another language which is more dominant they are English and Indonesia, because Rohingya children attend school in Medan and they are good at Indonesian language.

Cultural adaptation of Rohingya people with local people of Medan goes well and there is no serious problem although they experience a cultural shock at their first arrival. Cultural adaption occurs because of several aspects such as language, foods and way of dressing.

One the phenomena found by the researcher in the field is that the Rohingya people have already been able to speak Bahasa Indonesia in communication with the volunteers, local people and the visiting guests.

*“kami begini saja terus sudah berapa tahun kami disini, kalau kami lapar, kami makan, kalau dikasih kami mau warga disini saja”*

*“Saya sudah 2 tahun tinggal di medan, tidak ada apa-apa disini dan kami senang tinggal disini, tidak ada masalah, tidak bosan, kami tiga kali dapat makan dapat pakaian dapat semua yang kami butuhkan”.*

From the preliminary data above it can be seen that some of the Rohingya people are able to speak Indonesian language. Based on phenomena that happened in Medan, it is important to research on language attitude of Rohingya people towards their ethnic language.

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

Based on the background of the study above, the problems of the study as the following:

1. How are the attitudes of Rohingya teenagers toward their ethnic language in Medan realized?
2. Why do the Rohingya teenagers have such attitude?

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

In relation to the problems of the study, the objectives of this research as the following.

1. To describe the ways of the Rohingya people realized the language attitude.
2. To elaborate the reasons for the attitudes of the Rohingya people towards their ethnic language.

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

This study focused on the attitudes of the Rohingya in Medan who speak Rohingya language. In the process of analyzing the problems in this study, limit

the study is the language attitude of Rohingya whether it's positive or negative attitudes.

### **1.5 Significances of the Study**

The findings of this research are expected to give some relevant contributions both theoretically and practically.

1. Theoretically, the findings of the study will expect to justify or to enrich theories of language attitude. The findings of this research are going to justify or refuse the theories relates with language attitude of rohingya in Medan where the phenomenon of rohingya will show whether it affects the other customs, culture and also language maintenance of rohingya people or doesn't affect at all customs, culture and especially to certain language maintenance.

In addition, the findings will expect to add more horizons in language planning issues can give contributions to governments in maintaining language through education curriculum such as language cultural learning at society government.

2. Practically, the findings will expect to awaken awareness of Rohingya people in multilingual contexts. In additions, the finding are expect to be relevant and useful to language planners, language practitioners (linguist) and related institutions in efforts to maintain endangered language by conducting programs through organization intending to give guidance to society the importance of maintaining the ethnic language as typical identity, and will be useful as a reference for linguistic, lecturers, teacher, researchers and students

who have poison in language attitude, in order to know about the language attitude.



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