

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. The Background of the Study

Language is obviously a vital tool for communication. It is not only as a means of communicating thoughts and ideas, but also it is used for creating friendship, cultural ties, economic relationship, etc. The existence of language for human life is very important. Without a language, the society can not be formed and there will be no community. It is agreed that language cannot be separated from the culture as language is the product of the culture. The connection between the culture and language have been noted clearly in past time and probably long before, because language is the most visible symbol of an ethnic group.

Languages are formed and reflected by the most basic human experiences in the daily lives. Without proper scientific documentation, the decline of these languages will result in the irrecoverable loss of a unique knowledge that is based on specific cultural and historical experience. The increasing globalization in the twentieth century, with a small group of notions dominating the scene, has had an adverse effect on the shifting of social and cultural of many communities especially for the young generation.

The transmigrates from linguistically different background have long faced the task of maintaining the language origin when they stay in the new place and their children were born in it. To maintain the existence of their mother tongue, language maintenance influences and is influenced by the various factors

that transmigrate families encounter in their acculturation process in the host country.

As people from one culture, they have to adjust themselves to the changing of time. This is hardly felt by the youth. Therefore, the roles of parent in maintaining their own vernacular language to their children have to be developed. They have to use their vernacular language in communicate with their children in any chance. Thus, their vernacular language can be maintained.

Multilingual societies, such as Indonesia, offer great opportunities for in depth sociolinguistic studies, including those focusing on the idea of language maintenance and shift. Language shift and ramification are among the most important aspects of situation where different languages come into contact. This is because most often through social or political processes the language or languages become dominant at the expand of the others. Indonesia as a multi-ethnic country, is assumed that most of the Indonesian people use at least two languages: they are the vernacular language (mother tongue) and Indonesian language as a National Language to interact with their socio cultural. The vernacular language is used to communicate within their tribes and the Indonesian language is used between the different tribes.

In this world, there are thousands of languages. In Indonesia, specifically there are hundreds of vernaculars. Many vernaculars in Indonesia are endangered. As it was informed in Kompas (2007), about 726 of 746 vernaculars in Indonesia are endangered. Only 13 vernaculars have more than one million language users. They are Javanese, Batakese, Sundanese, Balinese, Bugisnese, Maduranese,

Minangkabau Language and etc, even there are many vernaculars but the use of those vernacular language which is used by language users are only ten vernacular language.

When a community does not maintain its language but gradually adopt another one, this is known as a language shift (Hoffman, 1991: 186). While language maintenance refers to a situation where members of a community which tries to keep the language they have always used. A research report from United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) forum (2002) on languages endangerment showed that languages were in danger of disappearing based on the documents 2279 languages with different degrees of endangerment and 538 were critically endangered. The youngest speakers are elderly, and interaction in the given language is infrequent. Thus, it can be assumed that these 538 languages will disappear in a few years when the speakers are gone.

Indonesia which consists of many islands and regions with different ethnic groups has a lot of vernacular languages. There are 746 vernaculars which are spread in Indonesia (www.depdikdas.go.id/pusat-bahasa/746-jumlah-bahasa-daerah-indonesia). The growth and development of regional languages are connected with the local cultural life in form enriching the national culture and also the national language. One of the vernacular languages which has development contribute to the development of the national language is Minangkabau language (*ML*). It is one of the vernaculars comes from the Austronesia. This language grown and developed in West Sumatera province.

Be, Japas, Malano, Ali & Isyam (1986:1) mention that approximately 90% of the population is the speakers of *ML* in West Sumatera. It is caused by the language policy which has been carried on by the government, thus the transmigrates are forced to use it as their daily language. The ethnic group who are also known as it likes to wander from one place to another, *ML* is also widely used in vary area outside West Sumatera. The shifting of a language happens in the young generation of Minangkabau ethnic group. They are difficult to maintain their original *ML* and pass on their heritage to their children because they do not have the facilities to do so in their adoptive society. Consequently, their language as well as their cultural and religious values are being eroded.

One of the cities which is the home for Minagkabau ethnic group is Medan, a multi-ethnic city. It competes to disappear among another vernaculars, Indonesian and English language as the impact of globalization. Several ethnics are live in Medan such as Javanese, Bataknese. Chinese, Mandailingnese, Minangkaba Language, Malaynese, Karonese, Acehnese, Tamil and others. *ML* is one of the vernaculars in Indonesia which is used mainly in Medan.

It is usually used by the transmigrates in Medan. But, the children who were born in Medan can not speak it like their parents. It is obvious that the children are influenced by many factors which influence their use of the language. The researcher discovers that there is a problem that occurs in the Minangkabau ethnic group in Medan in where she saw the children of both parents who came from West Sumatera tends to rarely use the language itself, whether at home or in their own community.

Holmes (2001) states that language shift is the replacement of one language by another as the primary means of communication and socialization within a community. The mark of shifting has long been seen in Medan. Every young generation which is born in this city (except expatriate) will get Indonesian language as their mother tongue. This condition was also proceed by Siregar, Isa & Husni (1998) in their research about the case of bilingual community in Medan that explained that the local language is very rarely used it, for example in the personal life such as at home, the function and the role of the local language start to loss.

It was happened in a small community which was researched by the researcher, namely the Association of *Sei Jaring* Community (*Ikatan Warga Sei Jaring: IWS*) in Medan. According to the Head of IWS, there are 97 families of IWS who lives in Medan. In where, based on the observation of the researcher, many of *IWS* families especially the third generation (children who were born in Medan) was a level danger because they had been influenced by the environment which is stayed by many ethnic groups. And this condition made the shifting of ML happening.

From the situation, Holmes (2001:63) states that where the language is considered as an important symbol of a minority group's identity, it is likely to be maintained longer. Another statement as said by Corson (2001:74) that maintenance of a heritage language is vital for the self-identity and esteem of its speakers. It means that if the vernacular is not maintained, it can be loss in the next generation.

Thus, the researcher would like to discover *ML* maintenance occurring in Medan and how to maintain it, because she experienced some difficulties in using *ML* for herself. Thus, the second generation namely parents, who moved from their hometown to Medan, and the children as the third generation, who were born in Medan (Kochan, Mapals, Smith & Webster, 2010) had to work each other and the existing Minangkabau community in Medan had to support it.

1.2. The Problems of the Study

Minangkabau language (*ML*) is very interesting to be discussed the causes of the language shift. Based on a preliminary observation and in line with the great importance growing of the preserving the existence and development of local languages especially to the Indonesian language as the national language, people of Minangkabau ethnic group who stayed in Medan have got problems on their language. The problems are formulated in the following questions.

1. What do the factors affect the maintenance of Minangkabau language (*ML*) in Medan?
2. How do the factors affect the maintenance of *ML* in Medan?
3. Why do the speakers maintain *ML* in the ways they do?

1.3. The Objectives of the Study

In line with the problems of the study, the objectives are.

1. to identify the factors in maintaining Minangkabau language (*ML*),
2. to discover the parents' efforts to maintain *ML* in Medan and
3. to find out the reasons why the speakers have to maintain the *ML*.

1.4. The Scope of the Study

A study on language maintenance is closely related to language planning program. The maintenance of a language is meant to avoid its disappearance. It is a fact that the younger generation should be aware of their vernacular that has shifted in a big city. One of the vernaculars is Minangkabau Language (*ML*) as a language of the Minang's people. And one of the communities which exist in Medan is The Association of *Sei Jaring* Community (*Ikatan Warga Sei Jaring: IWS*),

Therefore, the scope of this thesis is *ML* of *IWS* families, and the second generation and the third generation will be taken as the subjects. It is of prime important to protect its existence of the second generation (namely parents), who move from their hometown to Medan, and the children as the third generation (children), who were born in Medan.

1.5. The Significance of the Study

Findings of the study are expected to be relevant and useful theoretically and practically.

Theoretically, the findings would be an evidence of the present situation of the indigenous Minangkabau language (*ML*) in Medan especially in the community of *IWS*. The findings would be as a comparative study of many endangered languages for those who are interested in an intensive study of language maintenance, and the finding hoped to be useful for the next researchers who will do an in depth research dealing about language maintenance or any research about *ML*. Furthermore, the findings would be useful for language planners improve their knowledge about the vernacular and how to maintain it as to protect from the extinct.

Practically, since this research focuses on *ML* which is directly connected to Minangkabau culture and existence, it is also hoped to be useful for all Minang's people to realize that it is important to maintain their language in order to kept the existence of their ethnic group.