

MADURESE LANGUAGE IN WEST KALIMANTAN CONTEXT: THE OVERLAPPING OF SOCIAL GROUPS AND THE ENACTMENT OF SOCIAL IDENTITY.

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Abstract

This article discusses the linguistic shift experienced by the Madurese language used in West Kalimantan as well as the socio-cultural influences on the creation of a linguistic variation of the language. This language which was brought by the Madurese people as immigrants from Madura Island to West Kalimantan in the 18th century has transformed into a new variety of a language as the result of having direct and close linguistic encounters with the local language. The transformation seems to be apparent in the introduction of Malay-rooted lexical items and the understanding of Madurese stratification. It, in turn, has led to the construction of a new variety of the language as well as the creation of a new social identity for Madurese people in Kalimantan.

Keywords: Madurese, linguistic shift, social identity.

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INTRODUCTION

Language as a means of communication is never static. It is constantly changing and evolving together with its user's needs. The change becomes inevitable when it is separated from its origin and interacts with other cultures which, in turn, develops a 'dialectical diversity' (Fromkin, Rodman, Gyams, Collin, Amberber & Harvey, 2009, p.399) to create a new social identity for the speakers. This linguistic phenomenon occurs in the Madurese language, the indigenous language of the Madurese people from Madura Island of Indonesia, which have migrated and spread to other regions of Indonesia including Kalimantan. Afterward, the language experiences linguistic changes as it has close contact with the local language in Kalimantan such as the Malay language. The change is subsequently inherited by the next generation of Madurese people, making the process of linguistics change continuously occurs and goes further into a linguistics shift. Consequently, as time goes on, a new variety of the language which is in many ways different to that used in its place of origin emerges and, at the same time, signifies a new social identity of the speakers.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The Madurese Linguistics Shift

Just like other languages, Madurese which is classified as a Western Austronesian language of Indonesia (Davies, 2005), has experienced a linguistic transformation as the result of having contact with the other cultures, in this case, the Kalimantan Malay culture. Since Madurese people came to Kalimantan in the 18th century (Wawa, 2000), the language has actively interacted with the native language ‘breeding’ a new different variety of the language in terms of lexical items and the understanding of Madurese linguistic stratification.

The most obvious difference between the two varieties that can be identified is lexical items. In this context, Madurese Kalimantan has absorbed many words from the Malay language, one of the indigenous languages of Kalimantan, adding Malay words and morphemes to its lexicon as ‘loan words’ (Fromkin et al, 2009, p.459) and change the pronunciation of the words to fit the phonological rules of Madurese. Words such as *roma* for ‘house’, *bennyak* for ‘many’, and *utu* for ‘car’, for instance, are derived from Malay words of *rumah*, *banyak* and *oto* respectively. The borrowed items are frequently used in daily communication from one generation to the next, resulting in the disappearance of the original Madurese words for those lexical items in the Madurese speech community in Kalimantan. Hence, many individuals in the community, especially the youths, lose their familiarity with Madurese codes which, to a great extent, makes them fail to recognize that *bungkoh*, *possak*, and *montor* are the Madurese words for the abovementioned words. It seems that Madurese in the region has experienced a linguistic phenomenon of language displacement, something, as suggested by Holmes (2008), that commonly happens to any minority languages existing in a wider and majority society as ‘the degree of linguistic distance’ (Kloss in Edwards, 2010, p.85) between the two languages is extremely small.

The understanding of speech level

The change also affects the understanding of the Madurese level of speeches of Kalimantan Madurese. According to Stevens (1965), Madurese, like Sundanese, Javanese, and Sasak, has a range of word choices to be used in a conversation determined by the relationship between the speaker and by the social status of the subject referring to speech levels. Geertz (1976) emphasized how social status and familiarity determine the linguistic form choices among the conversers in Java linguistic etiquette; a common occurrence that is also unequivocally identified in the

Madurese language. If Sasak, the native language of Lombok, has 5 speech levels (Meyerhoff, 2006), Madurese, as outlined by Stevens, has 6 levels which are divided into two linguistic systems: a style system which is related to the level of familiarity between the speakers and a reference system which is used to refer to honored and high-status people, especially religious leaders. The style system, according to Stevens (1965) has 4 levels: Kasar (coarse), biasa (ordinary), tenga (middle) alus (refined) while the reference system has 2 levels: alus tinghi (high refined) and alus mandhap (low refined) which, in turn, can be compressed into three main levels: low, middle and high.

Most Madurese people in Madura island have a deep conscious awareness of the system. They repeatedly switch their codes from one speech level to another one depending upon the addressee in the conversation in their daily interaction. To identify themselves, for example, they use engkok, which is a low level for 'I' when conversing with colleagues or younger people. The code is subconsciously switched into kauleh, the middle level when the speakers need to identify themselves to older people or those with higher status. Meanwhile, in conversation with religious leaders, abdhina- high level- is used for the same purpose. The system of the speech levels is consistently implemented with a rigid separation of utilization between one level to the others as overlapping in usage may lead to an unpleasant situation in the conversation.

In contrast, Kalimantan Madurese has limited knowledge of this system. The majority of speakers only know the low level of Madurese with a very limited ability in using the middle one. The high level is most likely 'extinct' among the speech community as the version of the language seems unusable which results in an extensive alteration in the way of communication carried out especially the one with religious leaders. While religious leaders, in Madura island, are honored with the high level of speech or alus tinghi (high refined), in Kalimantan, it is scarcely conceivable since Kalimantan Madurese actively employ the middle level of speech- with a very limited number of active speakers- for both older people and religious leaders. It seems that in this area, Madurese speech level has been downgraded into the use of low-level code, building up a pragmatic competence in a different way from the people in the language's native land.

There are many instances where Kalimantan Madureses fail to properly use Madurese in various domains but, by the same token, strengthens their identity as Kalimantan Madurese. It is fairly common to find Madurese people in Kalimantan using words such as roma which is a low-level word for 'house' for every level of interaction instead of compok for middle and dhelem for high

level. In the case of identifying someone, the condition is better as they can accommodate the middle level as well. Instead of using *kakeh*, the low version for 'you', all the time, most of them also use *sampean* for both elderly people and religious leaders but they fail to recognize *panjenengan* and *ajunan* which are *alus tinghi* (high refined) or high level for religious leaders.

New Variety of Madurese and the Creation of New Social Identity

Madurese has seemingly shaped society's behavior toward the two varieties of language from both sides. For Kalimantan Madurese, the divergence has established their own distinct identity as linguistically different Madurese compared to the ones in Madura island by creating their variety of Madurese with 'distinctive local colorings' (Wardhaugh, 2006, p.45). The adoption of Malay words and the inability of applying speech level is entirely acceptable as they become part of their Madurese features with which they can be identified. Indeed, there is a fear of attrition of Madurese language which is surrounded by Malay as the main language in Kalimantan as it has been the case with Javanese and Indonesian as identified by Mueller (2009) or even of giving up the language in favor of the dominant language in the community as noted by Romaine (2000). Yet, heretofore, Kalimantan Madureses have developed and maintained their bilingualism with Malay as it gives them more access to the community as well as enables them to claim their identity as the member of the Malay speech community.

Meanwhile, for Madurese in Madura island, the adoption denotes the degradation of the language. As Madurese is a dominant language on the island, they articulate grave concern about prescriptively using the language in all of its aspects. The importance of addressing people with an appropriate speech level becomes the main feature of this variant of Madurese creating its exclusiveness among other varieties. Thus, the failure to appropriately apply it in a conversation is considered pragmatic incompetence as this element has been a part of, as Kramsch (1998) underlined, general expectancy or schemata in Madurese culture. Moreover, the attachment of an ill-mannered stigma will follow the failure and be considered as one of the common consequences, as suggested by Fought (2006), for not being able to deploy a proper code that is intimately related to ethnic identity.

Of the same importance, lexical choices also become the determining aspect to be linguistically included in the Madurese community. Kalimantan Madurese is considered a low Madurese language as it is heavily influenced by the local Malay language. Notwithstanding Madurese has loaned many words from Indonesian and Javanese (Stevens, 1966) such as *manok* for 'bird',

bhajah for crocodile, and ghighih for tooth derived manuk, baja taken from Javanese and gigi from Bahasa Indonesia which have undergone morphological modification to fit Madurese dialect and then considered to be a part of Madurese linguistics variables. Yet, adding more loan words to create a new variety of the language, especially from other local languages such as Kalimantan Malay to which Madurese people in Madura island do not have familiarity, seems unacceptable for them. As the consequence, the variety of the Kalimantan Madurese language is put into an undermined position. The more words adopted, the lower the level of the varieties will be since, as He (2018) suggested, the process of word borrowing may morphologically destruct the language and lead to a comprehension difficulty in a conversation.

Concerning the creation of a language variety in a multilingual community, the dominant society seems to exert inevitable social and cultural influences on the minority language. It happens to the Malay language which reinforces the existence of the Kalimantan variety of Madurese. Different from Madurese in Madura island which lives in a relatively homogenous language and culture, Kalimantan Madurese people have to face the fact that they are in the midst of a society that is linguistically and culturally diverse with the Malay language and culture as the dominant one. To cope with a linguistic obstacle, they learn to speak the local language which, according to Chambers (2003), becomes the most convincing markers with which to lay claim to local identity as well. It, in turn, develops their linguistic repertoire to be able to actively control the utilization of two regional varieties of Malay, Sambas Malay and Pontianak Malay, in different language domains besides their restricted use of Madurese language in their speech community. The linguistic repertoire is expanded even further as they are also exposed to the diglossic situation in the use of Bahasa Indonesia- the standard version of Malay- where its 'H' is used in the interactions within the formal institution and its 'L' variety becomes a bridge of communication with other ethnics groups. This condition subsequently enables the subconscious adoption of linguistics elements of another language, especially Malay, into Madurese which leads to a gradual displacement of the language.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it seems apparent that as the fourth most widely spoken language in Indonesia after Bahasa Indonesian, Javanese, and Sundanese respectively (Davies, 2010), Madurese in Kalimantan has been undergoing a language shift which, as underlined by Wendel & Heinrich in Heinrich (2015), might happen as the result of linguistic encounters between a minority language

with a dominant language community. The contact with local language and culture has introduced many new Malay-rooted words into the Madurese language and subsequently has altered Madurese's familiarity with their own language in terms of lexical items and stratification. Additionally, the linguistic phenomenon has changed the perception toward the concept of linguistic level in the Madurese language. From the perspective of Madurese people in Madura island, the influx of Malay loanwords to the Madurese language is regarded as a linguistic deformation, separating the language further from its origin. Yet, Kalimantan Madurese people recognize it as an adjustment to the local linguistic community and a linguistic assimilation to claim their identity in a socially dominant language.

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