Local Language in Globalization Era: Can It Survive?

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ABSTRACT
Language is recognized as an important identity of a nation. In a country which has diverse culture, such as Indonesia, language is considered as the specialty of culture diversion. Additionally, language is considered as one of the affected aspects in globalization. English as a global language and Indonesian as the national language have been taught to students since they enroll in primary schools in Indonesia. The intensive use of Indonesian in formal education and the increasing status of English as a global language have been viewed as a potential cause of local language extinction. This paper will discuss the critical position of local languages and offer ways to maximize the use of local languages in globalization era.

KEYWORDS: local language, globalization, language extinction

Language is one of the tools used for communication and interaction between people in different countries and regions. To communicate daily, one of the tools most commonly used is the language, both in spoken and written forms. By using the language, people can adapt to the customs, attitude, manners of society, and at the same time dealing with all forms of society easily.

Leech (1974 cited in Arokooyo, 2008) states that language has at least five functions in a society. These functions are expressive, phatic, informational, aesthetic, and directive. Expressive means that language is able to be used to express the language users’ feelings and attitudes. In other words, this function could give a clear image for the personality of the language users. Phatic represents that language is used
for general purposes of social interaction. An expression such as “Hello, how are you?” is the example of phatic. Another function is informational. It focuses on the use of language for delivering message and or to give new information. Further, Leech (1974 in Arokoyo 2008) mentions that aesthetic represents the use of language for the sake of the linguistic artifact itself, and for no purpose. This aesthetic function can have at least as much to do with conceptual as with affective meaning. The last function is directive which means the language is used as the purpose to influence the behavior or attitudes of others. The examples of this function are commands and requests.

Indonesia is well-known as one of the countries which has many local languages. The local languages coexist with Indonesian as well as foreign languages. It means through the languages exist in Indonesia a social relation happens. The relation can, however, affect the use of one language to others. Furthermore, the strong language or the language used more on the social interaction is able to survive, on the other hand another language in the society may not survive.

It should be realized that the development of other languages in Indonesia affects the position of local languages, particularly in social communication and contact. It has some side effects, such as the symptoms of borrowing language, the creation of a new language, or even at worst, the beginning of language extinction. There are some pieces of writing regarding language extinction. One of them is discussed by Darwis (2011) on the workshop of Pelestarian Bahasa Daerah Bugis Makassar. In his article, he discussed the opportunities and challenges which are faced by the local language, especially Bugis and Makasar languages, in globalization era. Another piece of writing was written by Eckert et al. On their paper entitled “Is English a ‘Killer Language’? The Globalization of a Code,” they discuss the position of English as global language towards the other languages especially in Papua New
Guinea and German language. In addition, Lyngnes (2013) conducted a study related to the Southern Sami language learning in Norway. The results of the study show that Southern Sami language learning in school offers very limited access to a Southern Sami language community due to the small number of pupils and teachers, lack of learning materials and most importantly the overall lack of language arenas for Southern Sami language.

**THE POSITION OF LOCAL LANGUAGES IN GLOBALIZATION ERA**

The position of Indonesian is regulated on the law of the constitution of 1945 in chapter XV section 36 which states that the national language is Indonesian. Nonetheless, Indonesian is generally known as a second language which is mastered after the mother language. Mother language refers to the first language learned by children. In this case, it is the local language taught by mothers to be mastered by their children.

Indonesian is taught formally from elementary school to high school levels. Considering that Indonesia is a country that has a wide range of local languages, the Indonesian serves as a means of unifying of various ethnic groups and different socio-cultural background. Not only as the language used as a communication tool between people from various background or local language, Indonesian also plays role as the official language used in formal and academic settings.

In terms of foreign languages, English is known as the most dominant foreign language taught in Indonesia. Although English is not used in a daily conversation, it is considered to be the most important foreign language to be learned and mastered in Indonesian schools and universities. According to Cahyono (2010), English is one of the most widely used languages and it is an important means communication in the
global world. No wonder English is usually taught to Indonesian students from elementary school level, even in big cities it is formally taught since kindergarten.

Halim (1976 cited in Lauder, 2008) argues that English has some official functions in Indonesia, such as means of communication among nations, means of development supporter of Indonesian language to become modern language, and means of science and technology transfer for national development. Some researchers state that the use of English in Indonesia has potentially been serving a number of important purposes (Dardjowidjojo, 2003, Huda, 2000, Renandya, 2000, Simatupang, 1999 cited in Lauder, 2008). First, it is a means of international communication in practically all fields or walks of life. Secondly, English is seen as a medium through which scientific knowledge and new technologies can be accessed and implemented with a view to succeeding in the global marketplace. Another purpose is that English is treated as a source of vocabulary for the development and modernization of Indonesian. Lastly, English is considered as a way to get to know native speakers of English, their language, culture and literature, or as a means of expanding one’s intellectual horizons.

Indonesia is the world’s fourth most populous country and has more than 500 ethnic groups, each with its own language (Purwadi & Muljoatmodjo, 2000 in Welch, 2011). In other words, Indonesia is recognized as a country which has large numbers variety of local languages. However, the increasing cases of urbanization and population movements, the dominance of the official language of a country in many aspects such as economic and educational sectors, as well as the recognition of the position of the official languages are feared to be the factors that causes the extinction of local languages. Not only the use of Indonesian as official language, but also English
and other foreign languages which have to be learned for dealing with the globalization era are feared to be the cause of the extinction of local languages in Indonesia.

Darwis (2011) mentions that there are three main reasons which cause the shifting of a national language (i.e., Indonesian) to be a local language or a first language learned by children. First, the pluralistic language used in society which makes a national language is the only means of communication to bridge language differences. Then, families moving to a new environment which has a different local language are ‘forced’ to use the national language to communicate with others. One of parents who come from a different race is also considered as a reason of the shifting of a local language. Furthermore, the use of Indonesian in young learners’ formal education, such as in kindergarten, is also another reason of the language shift. In kindergarten teachers use Indonesian as a medium of instruction instead of using the local language. Therefore, the parents need to prepare their children to relatively master Indonesian language as a first language before their children enter kindergartens.

Grimes (2000) suggests that there are six symptoms that mark language extinction in the future. The first symptom is the drastic decreasing number of active speakers of a local language in a society. Another symptom is the reduction of disciplinary field of learning local languages. Then, young speakers who neglect the use of local language as their first language is considered as the symptom of the extinction of local language. The effort to handling ethnic identity without using local language and the position of the people who become the passive users (understanding the language without the ability to speak) of local language also marked as the language extinction syndrome. The last symptom is the increasing number of local languages dialects extinction.
HOW TO STRENGTHEN THE LOCAL LANGUAGES?

Based on language facts discussed above, it can be concluded that local languages in Indonesia potentially face language extinction. There are, however, several ways to maintain the use of local languages and prevent them from the extinction. The first is to teach the local language to young learners, not only introducing the local language in the setting of social interactions, but also in a formal setting of teaching and learning process at schools. Local languages can be taught from kindergarten to senior high school levels. In this case, the teachers and curriculum designers have to balance the number of hours of studying the local language with the number of hours used to learn Indonesian and other foreign languages.

Promoting the use of local language through local culture is a good way to avoid local language extinction. Conducting cultural shows which promote the use of the local language not only to native speakers of the local language, but also to foreign speakers could be one of good efforts to maintain the local language. In East Java, for instance, local people often conduct cultural shows in the forms of local costume carnivals, traditional dance performances, puppet shows, drama performances (e.g., *ludruk, wayang wong*), and other traditional/local culture performances.

Shows in television and radio can also be used as a media to introduce and maintain the existence of local languages. Laksono (2004) states that various broadcasts using local language as a broadcasting language is considered positive because of several reasons. First, it motivates people to use a local language. Secondly, it potentially revives and redevelops the use of local language which might result in new ways of using local terms through anecdotes, dialogs, and other spoken forms. Another positive side is that the use of the local language can be mixed with the official
language in broadcasting a TV or radio program which eventually sustains the spirit of unity in diversity.

The last thing that can be done to maintain the use of local language is by doing language documentation. For instance, linguists can create a dictionary of local language to Indonesian or vice versa (e.g., the dictionary of Madurese-Indonesian, the dictionary of Indonesian-Sundanese, etc). Along with making dictionaries, authors and writers should be encouraged to create story books which promote the use of local languages in accordance with the origin of local stories. The Javanese folklore, Keong Mas, can be written in Javanese or Lutung Kasarung in Sundanese.

CONCLUSION

One of the effects of globalization is the threat to the existence of local language. The intensive use of Indonesian as the national language and English as a foreign language can be a potential threat to the extinction of local languages in Indonesia if it is not managed accordingly. There are, however, some alternative ways need to do to prevent the extinction of local languages, such as teaching local languages in formal settings, holding cultural shows associated with the use of local languages, having a television and radio program which is broadcasted by using local languages, and conducting language documentation.

REFERENCES


