

The Maintenance of Gorontalo Language on Teenager Group:

An ethnography at Gorontalo City

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Abstract—This research is to follow-up the issue spreading in the community concerning with the language shift that threatens the survival of Gorontalo language (BG), especially in the region of Gorontalo City. Language shifting that increasingly threatens the existence of Gorontalo language tends to occur in teenagers' groups (10-18 years). To investigate the language use and attitude as well as the inhibiting factors of Gorontalo language maintenance on the teenagers, the authors used ethnographic method. Interview, field observation, and ethnographic recording are used in collecting data. The results showed that the most dominant type of language shift in adolescents is the dominant use of other languages that change the position of Gorontalo language in various aspects of life. Teen-aged speakers prefer to code mixing the Gorontalo languages with other languages such as Manado Malay, Arabic, and Indonesian in their conversations. The language choice is influenced by negative attitudes towards language manifested by the rejection of the Gorontalo language. This negative attitude is also one of the factors inhibiting the language maintenance. The barrier of the Gorontalo language maintenance also includes the attitude of the community language in the social of environment of the adolescents and the local government policy on the maintenance of Gorontalo language.

Keywords—*language maintenance; teenagers; ethnography*

I. INTRODUCTION

Gorontalo is an ethnic residing in northern Sulawesi, Indonesia. It is not only inhabited by Gorontalo ethnic but has become the multi-ethnic community. Various ethnics assimilating with Gorontalo indigenous come from *Manado, Sangihe, Bugis, Buol, Kendari, Java, Arab, Pakistan*, and *Chinese*. They came into Gorontalo through religious and trading reasons.

This assimilation affects every social lives of Gorontalo. The Gorontalo residents acknowledge three native languages: *Gorontalo, Bonda*, and *Atinggola*. Over the time, the Gorontalo people have now known various languages brought by ethnic migrants. In Gorontalo City, the residents acknowledge such languages as *Malay-Manado* (hereafter written by BM), *Arabic-Malay* (BA), and *Indonesian languages* (BI).

The presence of these languages in a social setting indirectly has positive and negative impacts on the language development of community. The positive impacts include the ease of communication as several alternatives available to use that aligning with the needs of the speakers on the one hand. On the other hand, the negative one include there will be a language(s) struggling with the dominant language. Such conditions lead to the phenomenon of language shift and maintenance. Fishman compares the languages shift and maintenance as two sides of a coin. Languages that are beginning to be ignored by its speakers must be immediately re-established to use by the speakers of the language [1]. Language shift and maintenance must go hand in hand. The maintenance is needed when a language use begins to shift.

In Sociolinguistics, language preservation refers to language maintenance. Crystal [2], Batibo [3], Wardhaugh and Fuller [4] define language maintenance as an attempt to adopt specific attempts in order to speakers continue to use a language. Therefore, it is necessary to describe the language condition from its speaking community. In line with that, the investigation in Gorontalo City community shows that BG began to be pressed by other languages. This condition found to be occurred in various speaker groups especially on teenagers.

Vassberg argues that language attitude reflects users' attitude of the language involving motivation to choose language and may affect the language use [5]. The teenagers' attitude on BG can be traced by the language they use in their daily lives. The speakers' interest in something relating to a language will sufficiently describes for positive attitude on the language. It is confirmed by Nauri investigating the Azerbaijan teenager's attitude on Turkey language which found that the interest degree in language-involved materials was not in endangered level [6].

The major impact factor on language maintenance is the speaker care to it. Lao and Lee reported that 1½ to 2 immigrant generations in East Asia experienced language change [7]. Commonly, Khmer students only speak their language with their parents and his similar ethnic peers outside the family setting. Consequently, their speaking eloquence in Khmer is more advanced than other skills. This becomes a requirement

in communicating with old people and participating in similar ethnic social network. This condition is contrary with teenagers of Gorontalo City starting to leave BG behind even in their communication with their family.

II. METHODOLOGY

This qualitative descriptive study uses ethnographic method. Spradley argues that ethnography is an activity describing a culture intended to understand a view of life from the perspective of the natives by ignoring the knowledge of a researcher [8]. The ethnographic method using in this study can really describe the community being studied. In conjunction with the use of language by a community, ethnography can collaborate with sociolinguistics and communication study. Saville-Troike explains that ethnography of communication focuses on the speech community, the patterned and organized way of communicating as an event of communicative system, and other ways of interacting in a cultural system [9].

This qualitative approach is aimed at exploring the issue of the threat of sustainability of Gorontalo language prompted by the lack of language maintenance in adolescents as part of its speaking community. Creswell argues that exploration in a qualitative approach is intended to study a particular group or population based on the need for a complete and detailed understanding of the problems being studied [10]. In addition, this approach is also carried out by empowering individuals to convey their stories while minimizing the power relations that often appear to researchers. Through this qualitative approach, this study will explore to search for data related to language maintenance in adolescents in Gorontalo City. This exploration was carried out by ignoring the subjectivity of the researchers towards the results of the research. Furthermore, this study is carried out following the steps proposed by Spradley [8]: selecting project; proposing questions; collecting data; making record; analysing the data; and writing reports.

The data are divided into primary and secondary data. The former are speeches and speech parts of adolescents in Gorontalo City. The latter is in form of research supporting information consisting of written documents on the history, language, customs and culture of Gorontalo as well as notes on the development and growth of the youth in Gorontalo City. As primary data sources, informants are native speakers of Gorontalo language who are teenagers and live in the Gorontalo City. This limitation means to focus the study on the language use on a group of teenagers as well as considers the time of research.

III. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A. Gorontalo Language Use by Adolescents

This section describes the maintenance of BG by adolescents in their various social activities in the Gorontalo City region. Considering the adolescent interest in social activities, the social domain that is close to adolescent was chosen. *First*, family is close to the life of adolescents. In the family setting, a teenager can be freely involved by interacting with family members in a common language. *Second*, playing is as a second field where teenagers share various activities that

interest them. In this domain, they can engage with peers with a more diverse cultural background.

When interacting with the older family member, adolescents speak passively BG. Even though the language adult's use is dominated by BG, teenagers can respond to it using BM. However, the tendency of teenagers to use BM does not signal that they do not understand BG. The following conversation occurred between a teenager (R) and parents (D.1 and D. 2). This conversation happens inside the house when the teenager was about to leave the house. In this conversation, his father asked the teenager to convey his message to someone.

TABLE I. ADULT CONVERSATION DATA WITH ADOLESCENTS

Actors	Conversation	Meaning	Reference
D.1	<i>Popohe'uti mayi boyito bubunggallo wa</i>	'Close the gate, please.'	41.1
R	<i>Iyo</i>	'Ok'	41.2
D.1	<i>Wau ja lipatamu ti Ka Biji. Poleleya ma'o ando ti paapa mo minta tolong bakase bae lamari kalu ti Paali ada waktu</i>	'Don't forget <i>Ka Biji</i> . Tell him that Daddy wants to ask for help to repair the cupboard, if <i>Paali</i> has the time'	41.3
R	<i>Iyo, nanti ana mo singga pas bale kamari jo</i>	'Yes, I will stop off (him) when I back home'	41.4
D.1	<i>Wih, bolo madidu odunggamu tio. Ma ode hulialio pooli tio wau mo bale kamari tantu nanti malam</i>	'Wow, I worry you cannot meet him. He will go to the neighbour across and he may back home at tonight.'	41.5
R	<i>Ooh nte iyo somo singga kasana, Pa.</i>	Oh, alright (I) will stop off (to his house)'	41.6
	<i>Mama, somo pigi ana</i>	'Mama, I go first'	41.7
D.2	<i>iyu. Ada uang Uti?</i>	'Do you have any money?'	41.8
R	<i>Ti papa so kase tadi, kalu ti mama mo tambah bole olo</i>	'Papa have already gave me (money), it's okay if mama add it more'	41.9

The data showed that adolescents did not experience difficulties in understanding BG speech. However, they said that it will be more difficult and risky when they persist to use BG. It is risky to create an impolite atmosphere with their BG speech as there is a different value of the meaning they do not understand. Furthermore, teenagers prefer to use BM or BG-BM when responding to BG utterances.

Table 1 provides the use of two languages in a conversation. Teenagers use such elements of as: *ti* 'article for female' referring also to adults and people who are respected more and *olo* 'also'. The element of BM *mo* 'will' and Arabic *ana* 'I' (data 41.7). The element *ana* is generally found in conversation of Gorontalo community which is Muslim majority. Elements *ana* 'I' (41.7) is an element of the Arabic language. This Arabic element is the choice of speakers to polish the language. As the word referring to 'I' in the speech of Gorontalo society can be found in various forms of language other than BG, namely BM *kita* 'I' which in BG refers more to the word *wa'u* 'I' which has a tougher meaning than *watia* 'I'.

The observation conducted shows that the main factor affecting teenagers use a language is the conditioning they experienced in the family setting. Adolescents live with family

and involving them in conversation in BG show vocabulary choices in their utterances. This is far different from those unfamiliar with BG use in their family. The use of greetings be an indicator the politeness that interest the interlocutor instead of using proper name without article.

Polite and respect reasons to the older family members become an issue made teens unwilling to impose themselves using BG. Essizewa studying the Kabiye speakers in Togo, Africa found that a motive in language use pattern differs the adults from the youngers in family setting [11]. This language speaker only uses Kabiye when interacting with family members to respect the adults. This also makes Kabiye be in withstand position from other language pressure.

Furthermore, the object in BG maintenance by adolescents was the conversation among teenagers. It was found common characteristics of language use in the adolescents' conversation with their peer in various situations or settings. The following data are excerpts derived from the conversations among three adolescents (R). The teenagers commonly met in the street around their homes, teased each other, and made appointment to meet at a party.

TABLE II. CONVERSATION DATA AMONG TEENAGERS

Actors	Conversation	Meaning	Reference
R.1	<i>Wei, mo kamana ini?</i>	Hi, where are you going?	36.98
R.2	<i>So deng kancing bodi bagini?</i>	How neat you are.	
R.3	<i>Ba taman pa ana pe mama ka pesta sup.</i>	Accompany my mom to the party.	36.99
R.1	<i>Ah nanti ini ngana. Baru malam so tidak mo datang? Ada yang mo maraju ini kalu bagini.</i>	Well. Then. Will you not come tonight? If this happens, then someone will be disappointed.	36.100
R.3	<i>Sudah, aman itu</i>	Fine (its okay), safe.	36.101
R.1	<i>Oh curiga ngana ini am</i>	Oh, you are suspicious.	36.102
R.3	<i>Pokoknya skut saja, ana so atur itu.</i>	Just relax, I have arranged it.	36.103
R.2	<i>Bae-bae skut-skut kong baku dapa di bok.</i>	Be careful! You may come across her/him while relaxing.	36.104
R.3	<i>Aman. Mama, juga so banya orang.</i>	Mama, come on, there are many people (at the party).	36.105
R.2	<i>Wei jang makang banya ngana karna mo datang dua kali</i>	Don't eat too much because you will come twice.	36.106
R.3	<i>Huange'emu, nga kira kita mangoa rupa ngana</i>	You. I'm not you.	36.107
R.1	<i>Hahaha. Jang bagitu ente Amir. Yang punya pesta ini, jadi biar dia mo bekeng tujuh kali makan tidak ada yang mo baprotos</i>	Ha ha ha. Don't be like that, Amir. This is the owner of the party, so even though he eats seven times, no one will protest.	36.108
R.3	<i>Yang punya pesta lo. Ei, pigi dulu wa, malam torang bakumpul di sini supaya maso sama-sama wa?</i>	Whose party is this? Hey, I go first, tonight we will meet here so we can go in (to the party) together?	36.109
R.1	<i>Oke</i>	Okay	36.110
R.2	<i>Stenga lapan wa</i>	Eight thirty, huh.	36.111

In communicating with peers, the adolescents tend to use BM instead of BG. Some BG elements found merely in dialect form as seen in data (36.102) and (36.109); the use of *am* and

wa. Meanwhile, the word *huange'emu* 'literally means your armpit' (data 36.107) is an intimate invective word commonly found in the conversations of Gorontalo people who have close relationship. The rest was the use of BM.

The language characteristics used by adolescents do not indicate that they cannot speak in BG as it was found that there are teenagers who could understand BG spoken by adults in the suburb of Gorontalo City. However, most teenagers actually respond BG utterances with BM. Contrary, most adolescents who live in the centre of Gorontalo City experienced a difficulty in understanding BG.

Furthermore, the tendency to use BM in conversation by adolescent is driven by the conditions of language use in the family setting. Teenagers who live in a family setting that no longer uses BG in their daily lives will be more difficult to understand BG than adolescents who still use BG in their family setting. In addition, the use of language by the society in the surrounding environment also enforces the adolescents to use languages other than BG. The use of language by adults when speaking with teens will become a basis of using a language to respond. The adolescents will tend not to use BG if adults speak in other languages. On the contrary, adults will instead adjust their language to the language used by teenagers.

B. Adolescents' Attitude on Gorontalo Language

The description of adolescent attitudes towards BG is obtained from the results of interviews with the informants. Interview results refer to adolescents' attitude on BG categorized into positive and negative attitudes. The observation also shows that the teens in their communication activities are very rare to find to use BG. If there are, those are only simple elements of BG that often code-mixing with BM or other languages used. The global exposure to information is considered to distract mind set resulting in adolescent attitude shifting on BG.

Bartlet as cited by Garo reminded that attitudes are a complex state of personal and personally and socially psychological conditions concerning with the characteristics of cognitive activity [12]. Motivation, interests, and values interact with attitudes to direct and determine cognitive activities. In other words, attitude is also basically influenced by social conditions as a place for everyone. The parents cannot ignore that environment affects significantly their children attitude on the language. The adolescents in the Gorontalo City area also tend to consider BG as a language used by the ancient people. Even teenagers were also found to think that BG was only the language of rural communities and was not suitable to use in urban areas. Such attitudes can be found in all areas of Gorontalo City. This is based on the interview with adolescents, parents, and public figure in Gorontalo City area.

Fishman describes what the speakers of Xish language did by committing to keep teaching and familiarizing their language use in the family setting to their generations [13]. Thus, when their generation socializes and learns other languages in the school, politics, public administration settings and so on, it does not become the threat to the language. This implies that language maintenance will greatly result in

positive effect as long as all levels of society make their commitment.

Information collected through interviews shows that negative attitudes towards BG tend to emerge rapidly in adolescents living in the city centre. Adolescents who have assimilated with the wider social environment, either in the education or work environment tend to show a resistant attitude to BG. They acknowledge that the use of BM or BI ease them to connect with their social community. On the other hand, the positive attitude still tends to be found easily in groups of teenagers in the suburbs. If the former group is easier to use other languages, the latter group which are generally young workers, found it difficult to use Malay.

However, community figures assume that adolescent attitudes can be originated from the adults' attitude passed on the young generation. Based on the observations, it was found that adults who use BG in their daily lives when talking in the family settings will generate a positive attitude towards BG from their children. Likewise, children will tend to have a negative attitude towards BG in families whose adults no longer use BG with both adults and adolescents. It is important to foster a positive attitude towards language in order to repress the various factors affecting BG maintenance. Holmes asserted that language attitude is strongly influenced by social and political factors of among are the policy of determining language use which must consider the acceptability of the language in its speaking community [14].

C. Other Factors Affecting Gorontalo Language Maintenance in Adolescents

Language maintenance goes hand in hand with language shifts even though the two are contradictory. Matiki suggests that indications of language shifting are the use of other languages by speakers of certain languages simultaneously in a long time [15]. To address it, it requires effort to maintain by investigating firstly the causative factors. Various studies on language maintenance in a number of ethnic or speech communities have discovered various factors supporting language maintenance.

Basically, the maintenance of BG is influenced by various factors. This section discusses factors summarized from observation and interview results with community and government officials in the several suburbs and centre of Gorontalo City. The concern for the condition of the language according to Crystal is a very reasonable thing for some reasons: (a) humans live in diversity; (b) language can express human identity; (c) language is the source of the human life history from time to time; and (d) each language has a unique impression in all its elements [2].

1) Concern on Gorontalo language: Based on the results of the study it was found that adolescents' concern on BG was declined. Especially for the people of Gorontalo City it is very difficult to find a group of adolescents who really care about BG. This decline is found in adolescents' attitude on BG, they have no interest in learning BG and avoid to use it. The elementary reason is the adolescents tend to be less familiar with BG as they should. In some situation, BG use by

teenagers especially the uneducated ones show the habituation BG use merely on negative connotation words. The adults argued that it indicates the inheritance of language culture from family and the surroundings the teenagers live in.

The concern for BG was also acknowledged by a number of informants as the mistakes of adults who were negligent in inheriting the language. When this research conducted, the people of Gorontalo City showed their initiative to provide information on concern for BG. This is expected to be a signal that BG maintenance is still not too late to be carried out in order to save it. Therefore, the problem of language concern, among others, can be addressed by motivating the community to inherit BG to the younger generation.

2) Government policies on Gorontalo language: Language maintenance is an attempt to do in collaboration with the social elements. England describes revitalization effort on Maya language conducted with supports from all elements of the community including government through various policies [16]. This effort can also be carried out to strengthen BG vitality by its community speakers. The government has issued local law about BG standard and suggestion to use it in civil services domain. However, the policy has not been implemented totally.

The realization of government policy is done by appealing the government officials of Gorontalo City to accustom the use of BG in various public activities. This is intended to motivate the community in BG maintenance. In its practice, a number of government policies has not been accompanied by monitoring in its realization. In addition, the educational policy related to the teaching of Local Content BG faces such problems as insufficient teachers and curriculum as well as continuity of teaching after Elementary School.

Haarmann argued that language maintenance needs best-laid planning, from language introduction to formal linguistic community (i.e. education, government audience, law system, science development) to politician promotion encouraging the language maintenance [17]. In other words, the government should take part in supervising and directing the policy implementation it issued. The BG maintenance can be carried out through youth organization at the local area. The government firm is required in developing the organization as an effort in maintaining BG.

3) Progress in community development in the area of Gorontalo City: The progress refers to the development and changes in the condition of society in various aspects of life. One of the causes of this change is the population growth. To this respect, the Gorontalo City population continues to growth over the years. This is in accordance with statistical data about the rate of population growth released by the Gorontalo City Population and Civil Registry Service. It reports that population has grown by around one to three percent per year in 2010 to 2015.

This population growth ultimately affects such the economic sector as the increasing number of people who need jobs. This condition encourages job provider to open business units in Gorontalo City. Most national scale business units

generally have service standards that require workers to use Indonesian. This requirement in working setting has affected the attitude towards BG.

IV. CONCLUSION

Determining the condition and status of a language, basically, requires insightful and profound investigation by exploring all factors involving with. Therefore, this study can be proceeded by studying pattern and attitude BG speakers in the different communities and broader scopes. The discussion on BG maintenance on teenagers' groups in Gorontalo City bring to some conclusions as follows: *Firstly*, the use of BG in teenagers' lives has been at a low and endangered level. In various social interactions, adolescents prefer not to use BG anymore because of the condition of the surrounding communities starting to leave BG behind. *Secondly*, the adolescents show a negative attitude to BG which is reflected from their low respect to BG as their vernacular. *Finally*, BG maintenance is influenced by factors existing in inside and outside of the speakers' community. The dominant factors identified in the adolescent group are the decreasing awareness toward BG existence, the discontinuing teaching of BG to the next education level, and the exposure of the changing and developing impacts to the society requiring the adolescents and community to involve in a social community where its members not merely the BG speakers.

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