

## LANGUAGE DEATH OF ARABIC LANGUAGE IN MEDAN. CASE STUDY: ARABIC SOCIETY IN MEDAN

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### ABSTRACT

The results of the study concluded that the reasons of the language death happened among Arabic community in Medan mostly because as the descendants of the third generations do not speak the language anymore, since their grandparents used bilingual to their parents yet they chose to speak Indonesian as their favorite language. Moreover, most of them already do inter marriage and neglected their cultural language and identity and assimilated to their spouses. The young generation has been sent in the schools which only use Indonesian as an interaction among them.

*Keywords: language death, arabic language in Medan, arabic community*

### 1.1. Introduction

A language is used among people to communicate by speech, writing or gestures to each other to convey what is inside their mind with the same understanding among them. Apart from that, a language is also used to show the identity of the speakers as heirs to the ancestors by maintaining its culture as Edwards (2009) mentioned that The language we use forms an important part of our sense of who we are – of our identity. Obviously it is very essential for human being and it distinguishes human from other creatures in the world. Language is the human property and originated in man.

There are thousands of languages are used around the world. Some of them are selected as an international languages and used as official languages of United Nation Organization, there are English, French, Arabic, Russian, Spanish and Chinese. The Department of Global Communications has determined language days for each of the United Nation's (UN) six official languages. The aim of the UN's language days is to celebrate multilingualism and cultural diversity as well as to promote equal use of all six official languages throughout the Organization. As Crystal (1997) stated that people keep maintaining their language in order to create cultural diversity, keep ethnic identity, enable social adaptability, increasing security for the children psychologically, and increase the linguistic sensitivity.

Indonesia is one of many multilingual countries in the world. There are around three hundred languages are used in Indonesia. It is not only vernacular languages yet some of them are derived from outside of Indonesian origins such as Arabic, Chinese, Indian, etc. As a minority group in Indonesia, Arabic community who came years ago to Indonesia as migrants (merchants, Islamic preachers, etc.) has neglected the Arabic language and shifted into Indonesian language.

As my previous research reported that The pattern of Arabic language shift in the second generation of Arabians in Medan is they become bilingual; speak well Arabic language and Bahasa Indonesia and they use both languages in the family domain and sometime in friendship domain, in this case in Arabic communities (Asmitazkirah, 2013). Meanwhile the third generation of Arabic communities only use Indonesian to communicate in every domain among them, it provokes them to lose the ability to speak in Arabic language as their mother tongue. It could become a dying language.

Language death is an important issue because a language is related to a culture and identity of a certain group which means if the language dies, the culture itself will also die as well. This issue thus goes beyond language and touches on problems with culture as specific languages would have specific expressions and with the loss of language there would be a loss of such specific expressions as well and this means

that there will also be a loss of knowledge or every few people would be able to relate to cultural knowledge or transfer certain cultural identity and expressions to the next generation. Dixon (1997) has suggested that smaller societies and even tribes dealing with minority languages have complex hierarchies and communal relations and associated complex pronoun structures which may not be completely grasped or interpreted with a majority modern language.

### 1.2. The Problem of the Study

The problem of this study is to investigate how the Arabic language is dying among Arabic community in Medan, North Sumatera.

### 1.3. The Objective of the study

With reference to the problem of this study, the objective of this research is to find out how the Arabic Language in Medan North Sumatera is dying among Arabic community.

#### 2.1. Review of Literature: Language Death

According to Collin English dictionary language death is the complete displacement by another in a population of speakers. The extinction of a language is a distressing matter, since the cultural tradition connected to it and the socio-cultural or even ethnic independence of the group that speaks it very often perish together with it, yet it is a very common phenomenon. There are hundreds of languages are endangered or becoming extinct by the end of the century in the world. Languages have always disappeared: Gothic, Etruscan, Iberian, Sumerian, Hittite, Egyptian, etc., but the world-wide colonization of many small ethnic units by a minute number of large ethnic units, the formation of big national states, the development of transport technology, the spread of supra-regional communication media, etc. have led to an enormous increase in the extinction of smaller languages which can hardly be stopped (Sasse, 1992).

The children of migrant families create potential impact(s) on the diminishing lingual heritage by taking active part in the schooling and interacting with other members of the society in a new place. Thomason (2001) stated that it has been seen that the process of death itself started way before the death of the last speaker, when the

speakers lost their critical mass and often also when the structures were seriously replaced by those of the prevailing language. The stage of language threatened scale according to Fishman (1991) are:

Stage 1: Used by higher levels government and in higher education.

Stage 2: Used by local government and mass media in the community.

Stage 3: Used in business and by employees in less specialized work areas.

Stage 4: Language is required in elementary schools.

Stage 5: Language is still very much alive and used in community.

Stage 6: Some intergenerational use of language.

Stage 7: Only adults beyond child bearing age speak the language.

Stage 8: Only a few elders speak the language.

According to Fishman mentioned above, the scale of the threatened Arabic languages among Arabic community in Medan is at Stage 8, which means there are only few elders who are still able to communicate in Medan.

#### 2.2. Arabic Community in Medan

Medan is the capital city of the North Sumatera province in Indonesia. Medan is the fourth largest city in Indonesia (beside Jakarta, Surabaya, and Bandung), and the largest Indonesian city outside Java island. Medan is a multiethnic city. Almost every ethnic in Indonesia especially from around Sumatera is found in Medan. And so is the ethnic from outside Indonesia, such as Chinese, Arabian, India, European, etc. When Dutch occupied Indonesia, the residence is clustered by ethnic people.

The residences for Arabic people in Medan are found in many places, such as, 'Silalas', 'Sungai Kera', 'Pandau Hulu', and 'Kampung Dadap' which is called as 'Kampung Arab', etc. The arrival of Arabic people in Medan was mostly from Hadhramout, one of the valleys in Yemen. The Hadhrami, people of hadhramout, travelled to South East Asia to find a better life because their land is very barren, right after they found the refinery in Arabic lands, they stopped travelling to South East Asia anymore (Balatif, 1980). In Indonesia, Arabic people are associated with the spreading of Islam. As Hamka (1961)

stated that Arabic people are the Islamic pioneer, they came to Malay lands in VII century BC, or it is called as the first year of Islam. The entry of Islam in Indonesia was not organized by a certain country or institution, but it was brought voluntarily by the merchants whom wanted to make trade transaction at the beginning (Noerman, 1971).

### 2.3. Arabic Language

Arabic (أبجدية عربية) al-'arabīyah or (أبجدية عربية/عربية) arabī is a name applied to the descendants of the Classical Arabic language of the 6th century AD. This includes both the literary language and the spoken Arabic varieties. Arabic usually designates one of three main variants: Classical Arabic; Modern Standard Arabic; colloquial or dialectal Arabic. Classical Arabic is the language found in the Qur'an and used from the period of Pre-Islamic Arabia to that of the Abbasid Caliphate. Theoretically, Classical Arabic is considered normative, according to the syntactic and grammatical norms laid down by classical grammarians (such as Sibawayh), and the vocabulary defined in classical dictionaries (such as the Lisān al-'Arab). In practice, however, modern authors almost never write in pure Classical Arabic, instead using a literary language with its own grammatical norms and vocabulary, commonly known as Modern Standard Arabic. This is the variety used in most current, printed Arabic publications, spoken by some of the Arabic media across North Africa and the Middle East, and understood by most educated Arabic speakers. "Literary Arabic" and "Standard Arabic" (أبجدية عربية) are less strictly defined terms that may refer to Modern Standard Arabic or Classical Arabic.

### 3. Research Methods

This qualitative research was carried out through verbal utterances (Moleong, 1990); therefore, it was also called descriptive in which the data was taken in the form of field notes, interviews, observations, questionnaires, personal documents and other important documents (Suri, dkk, 2016). The research location was in Medan, a capital city of North Sumatera. There are two big popular Arabic communities in Medan. Every Arabic descendant who lives in Medan joins in

these communities. The communities are called Annady Al-Islamy and Al-Ichwany Al-Arabiya. The research had taken the subjects from members of some Arabic communities, which focused on the third generations whom registered as a member of the community of Annady Al-Islamy, for male community, Al-Ichwany Al-Arabiya, for female community. The sampling technique was random.

### 4. Results and Discussions

The writer in this case will discuss about Language death in Arabic Language in Medan. This paper will focus on the factors of what it will occur, the pattern of Arabic language death in Medan and the reason of Arabic language death in Medan. This study has never been touched before. Instead the Arabic communities are already there in Medan for years. Based on her experience, many of Arabians in Medan do not use their mother tongue anymore. If the language is being fully neglected, or at least reluctantly maintained by its own native speakers, it will suffer of attrition in form and structure or even worst, be endangered. She realizes that Arabians in Medan are immigrants, not indigenous ethnic in Indonesia, but the language is a cultural heritage, if it is not being maintained, the culture which it lived is lost too.

Bilingualism factor is one of the factors which affects Arabic language death in the second and third generation. Almost all the subjects of the second generation experience this factor. From the result of the research, it can be seen that the subjects of the second generation hardly used Arabic language and tend to use Indonesian in daily activities. Some of them use fully Indonesian at home, and some of them use both, Arabic and Bahasa Indonesia with their offspring. It may cause the preferred language used among the third generations in their activity life in every domains and situation., which is Indonesian has chosen becoming the favorite language used among Arabic community. The third generations often do intra marriage (marrying a spouse from other ethnics), They do not think it will maintain their culture, some of them think that a soul mate is already regulated by God. So they cannot decide with whom they will marry. It is 35% of

third generations do or will do inter-marriage, and 65% of them do or will do intra-marriage. Since it is already the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> Arabic generations in Medan, Most of them do not think about inter marriage anymore to maintain their culture since most of them are already mixed descendants.

The other reason is in Medan, most of the young generations are sent into schools which are used Indonesian as a main communication and interaction amongst them yet some of them has sent their offspring to “tahfiz” schools which used Arabic language at schools. The value and attitude on a language is crucial to indicate whether the language maintain, shift or even death. the third generation of Arabic in Medan has a negative language attitude or their loyalty of using Arabic language reduces. The third and their descendants seldom to speak Arabic language or even cannot speak Arabic language anymore because they are lack of competence of speaking the language. Even so, they assume that Arabic language is a symbol of identity of Arabians. Some of them also think that as Moslems people should learn Arabic language to understand the content of Qur’an easily, that is the main reason why they have sent their children to “Tahfiz” schools, but they do not acquire the Arabic language anymore instead of learning the language at schools.

Data of the reason of Arabic language shift into Bahasa Indonesia is taken from the interview with subjects both in the second and third generations. As it is a continued research in this case, the researcher continued to the fourth and fifth Arabic generations. The third generation’s descendants do not recognize Arabic culture as their cultural heritage and cultural identity anymore, even though they still realize that they are a part of Arabic community in Medan. It is derived into a language death in this case. The parents deliberately do not teach the children of their own language and instead adopt the majority language spoken among their society in their home. This can be considered as a language suicide for some linguists.

## 5. Conclusion

The results of the study concluded that the

reasons of the language death happened among Arabic community in Medan mostly because as the descendants of the third generations do not speak the language anymore, since their grandparents used bilingual to their parents yet they chose to speak Indonesian as their favorite language. Moreover, most of them already do inter marriage and neglected their cultural language and identity and assimilated to their spouses. The young generation has been sent in the schools which only use Indonesian as an interaction among them. However, there are two big Arabic communities in Medan which still make activities related to Arabic cultures. Therefore, it is expected that Arabic language can be revived among Arabic community in Medan.

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