

# Pakpak Dairi Language: Perception Of The Speaker Community

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**Abstract** Language is very closely related to communication. Indonesian who are generally bilingual (master both languages: mother tongue [native] and Indonesian), it's possible to create language friction and conflict. This linguistic phenomenon has advantages and disadvantages. These linguistic conflicts then raise linguistic symptoms such as diglossia, code switching, code selection, language shifting, language retention, and even language killing. Language shifting is increasingly common nowadays. The use of regional languages as local identity is diminishing. The invasion of outside culture and the development of information technology play a big role in the case of language shift. Humans seem to have a negative perception because they do not have pride in their mother tongue. This study wants to examine the perception of the Pakpak community towards the Pakpak Dairi language. With a sociolinguistic approach to ethnography, it will be studied and analyzed how the preservation of Pakpak Dairi language through the perception of its people, the loyalty and pride of its speakers towards Pakpak Dairi language. Perception is the main key in creating a positive attitude or negative attitude towards mother tongue. The more we feel proud of the language; the language becomes more fertile and continues to grow. Conversely, if pride fades, the age of a language also continues to diminish.

Keywords: sociolinguistics, community perception, defense, language shift

## 1. Introduction

At this time, Indonesian language has gained status as a language of prestige, namely as a language of the middle class educated and the language of the Indonesian elite[1]. It can be said that Indonesian has achieved its symbolic function as the unifying language, identity giver, and authority bearer[2]. The achievement of this status is closely related to the policies of the New Order government (1968-1998) in the field of language, in particular, and in the field of economic development in general. The foundation of New Order government policy in planning national languages is based on the belief that standardization, modernization and intellectualization of the Indonesian language play an important role in creating innovation and information communication as a component of Indonesia's economic development. The Language Center has a very central role in implementing the law on standardization of the Indonesian language so that the mastery of the correct Indonesian language is identical to the language of educated and professional people. Government language policies that make language a symbol of nationalism have brought Indonesian language to a high status and

communicative function as the language of the nation in the modern world, and which at the same time also obtains values as symbols of something that can be called an identity, namely native Indonesia[1].

Apart from the criticism of some parties towards government policies in the field of language which are seen as placing Indonesian language exclusively as the language of the elite, not the language of the common people, people's knowledge of Indonesian has increased.[3], [4] reported that the number of Indonesian speakers increased sharply from 40.5% in 1971 to 60.8% in 1980, and reached 82.8% in 1990. This increase was also closely related to the New Order government policy in the field of basic education which provided broad educational opportunities to the people. The language, which was the mother tongue of around 5% of Indonesia population in the early 20th century (Sneddon 2003: 140), is now used by more than 90% of Indonesians[1].

The nation's positive attitude towards Indonesian, however, has contributed to the weakening of the position of regional languages in various regions in Indonesia. Many studies prove that there has been a shift in language in various regions in Indonesia[5], [6]. Comparing census data from 1980 and 1990, [6] concluded that most young people have very low competence in their local language. In talking with someone who is considered higher social class, many of them choose to use Indonesian for the purpose of safe sociolinguistic communication. The realm of usage and formal variants of regional languages is increasingly limited in their use in communication between elderly people in the neighborhood, at formal ritual events, and traditional art performances.

The same language phenomenon is also found in the Pakpak Dairi language speaker (hereinafter abbreviated as PDL). Indonesian has entered the family domain and used the language among fellow family members. Most children from young middle-class educated families use Indonesian, or use both languages, namely Pakpak Dairi language and Indonesian, as the family language at home. Whereas in the past few decades, when Pakpak adults felt ashamed and strange speaking their fellow Indonesian, now Pakpak people, especially from young age groups and from various social backgrounds, feel comfortable and usually speak Indonesian. Many of Pakpak overseas who return to their villages also feel comfortable speaking Indonesian with their families, relatives and friends who live in the village. It is estimated that various socio-cultural influences have contributed to changing patterns of language use in the Pakpak Dairi community. The increasing exposure of Indonesian in mass media, especially other social media and the increasing use of foreign languages, such as English, are a number of possible external factors. Internal factors such as people's attitudes towards their mother tongue and local culture and changes in people's way of life and thinking are thought to contribute to this language behavior. These assumptions require a study to obtain empirical evidence.

## **2. Research Method**

This research was conducted in Sidikalang, Dairi district in North Sumatra Province, and used the ethnographic sociolinguistic approach. Research that implements [7],[8] domain theory applies survey, observation, and interview methods. Respondents are Pakpak people who were chosen based on the purposive sampling method of different sexes and ages. Respondents involved in research in the city of Sidikalang numbered 120 people (out of 300 distributed questionnaires) consisting of 20 children aged  $\leq 20$ , 20 teenagers aged 21-30, 20 adults 31-40; 20 adults aged 41-50, 20 parents aged 51-60 and 20 parents / grandparents  $> 60$  years old. The total of respondents, there were 50 men and 70 women. The survey questionnaire contained a

list of self-report inducements about the use and choice of respondents' language as used by [5] and who examined Sasak in Lombok[9]. Survey data and observations obtained after being selected, inventoried, and clarified, then tabulated to calculate the frequency of occurrence for each variable according to their respective groups.

### 3. Results And Discussion

Perception is a view, observation or response of people to an object, event, human behavior, or things that are encountered everyday[10]. Perception can be said is a process of recognition or knowledge of objects through human senses and then interpreted to provide understanding. Through perception, a person continues to make contact with the environment and other people. This relationship is done through the senses, namely the sense of sight, hearing, touch, taste and smell. Each individual perception of something will be different because someone perception of something will affect his mind. Perception will allow humans to give an assessment of a particular condition because of the stimulus provided. The perception referred to in this research is the perception of the speakers community towards the Pakpak Dairi language, thus showing how their language choices are when in the realm of the home; whether they are still having a positive perception or leading to negative.

Positive perception of Indonesian and towards Indonesian speakers and high appreciation of education and educated people, and the modern lifestyle in the city are factors that motivate young families to use Indonesian in the family and encourage children and adolescents to not speak Pakpak Dairi language.

Linguists who pay attention to the phenomenon of language extinction conclude that the main reason for language extinction is that parents no longer teach their mother tongue to children and no longer actively use it at home in various domains of communication [11]. So the extinction was not because the speakers stopped speaking, but because of the choice of language use of most of the speech community[12] [13]. Language speakers choose not to learn mother tongue to their children and choose not to use active methods in the realm of speech at home. Based on Grimes' opinion above, this study will examine how the use of Pakpak Dairi Language in the non-formal domain at home in the family.

Based on the weighting scenario in the methodology mentioned above, it was found that only respondents over the age of 60 years who still always (almost always) use PDL rather than Indonesian (BI). Judging from the age parameters of the respondents to the choice of answers (language used in the realm of the family) it looks as shown in Table 1 below.

**Table 1** Language choices in the homes realm of Pakpak family

Age Group	BI	PDL
≤20	9/20 (45%)	11/20 55%
21-30	8/20 (40%)	12/20 60%
31-40	7/20 (35%)	13/20 65%
41-50	5/20 (25%)	15/20 75%
51-60	3/20 (15%)	17/20 85%
>60	1/20 (5%)	19/20 95%

There are differences in language usage trends based on age groups in communication between children and their parents at home. As shown in the table above, the percentage of respondents who use the Pakpak

Dairi language in communicating with their parents is getting smaller with the younger age. Age becomes a significant social variable in the phenomenon of language use; different age groups display different language behaviors.

This can be observed from the difference in the percentage of respondents from different age groups who use Pakpak Dairi and Indonesian in their communication with members of the nuclear family (father-mother) and extended family (grandfather / grandmother) at home.

The percentage of the number of respondents aged  $\leq 20$  who use Pakpak Dairi language is smaller (55%) compared to the percentage of the number of respondents aged  $> 60$  (95%). It means that the age group  $\leq 20$  chooses to use Indonesian almost as much as the Pakpak Dairi language. What is of concern is that the lower the age group of the Pakpak family, the higher the average value of the Indonesian language selection. It means that the younger the Pakpak ethnic family the more frequently used Indonesian language. And this fact concludes that the Pakpak young age group began to have a negative perception of the Pakpak language and began to switch it to Indonesian.

Differences in language usage patterns or language choices by Pakpak Dairi speakers of different generations can be interpreted as having or are being shifted. Although it cannot be said that the existence of the Pakpak Dairi language is currently under threat, the tendency of young families to choose to use Indonesian as a family language will bring the Pakpak Dairi language into a threatened position for the next three generations.

#### **4. Conclusion**

The local language or mother tongue is important to continue to use because the local language and Indonesian as national languages have their respective functions and positions, so both languages must be used in accordance with their respective functions. But in reality Indonesian language has often seeped into the realm at home, resulting in the local language pushed, shifted and weakened.

The perception of the Pakpak community towards their language correlates with their language attitude. The perception, the behavior of the Pakpak community, is an external factor that greatly influences the retention of Pakpak Dairi language. Positive perception is seen through their positive attitude in the form of an attitude of choosing to use Pakpak Dairi language in the informal domain at home and in other family-based activities.

Pakpak Dairi language that should be used by speakers in the family environment at home and in everyday relationships has begun to compete in its use with Indonesian. This will result in the erosion of this language in the next two or three generations.

#### **Aknowledgements**

The research team would like to thank the USU Research Institute for giving confidence to the implementation of this research. This article is part of TALENTA USU research entitled *Ketergerusan dalam Kediglosiaan Bahasa Pakpak Dairi :Kajian Perspektif Gender*. This research is funded by an implementation contract of TALENTA research University of Sumatera Utara *Skema Penelitian Dasar Tahun Anggaran 2019 . Nomor: 176/UN5.2.3.1/PPM/KP TALENTA USU/2019*.

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