The Community Attitudes toward Gorontalo Languages

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Abstract. This study describes the people attitude towards Gorontalo language as the Gorontalo ethnic identity. It is the fact that there was a change of community attitude towards the language from generation to generation. Observations on language attitudes are carried out using ethnographic method in three age groups: children, adolescents, and adults living in Gorontalo City. The results indicate that the attitudes of the three groups lead to negative attitudes influencing the maintaining condition of Gorontalo language. The negative attitude is seen in the increasing pressure Gorontalo language receives as a result of social interactions in every aspect of its people's lives. In their social interaction, the people of Gorontalo City prefer to use Malay-Manado and Indonesian, while Gorontalo language is set aside. The use of Gorontalo language can be found only in a very small scope, that is in the interaction among parents in the family setting and in custom-cultural ceremonies. In various interactions involving the young group, the study found a tendency to use other languages. This negative attitude is influenced by such factors originating from the community as a poor effort the parents made in inheriting the language to their children as well as weak support from the government and stakeholders. On the other hand, the high population mobility, as the external factor, results in the changes in economic, social and cultural conditions of the people of Gorontalo City. The changes require the Gorontalo City people to interact with other ethnic groups living in the community.

Keywords: *Community Attitudes, Gorontalo Community*

1 INTRODUCTION

The most well-known wise expression said, "language reflects the social class" or "self-imaging reflected on the language he/she used. The expression echoes the close relationship between language use and the speaker. The good or bad of the language speakers use indicated their view and attitude on the language. Eades and Siegel have studied the poorly speakers of English-Australian in Australia. It revealed that some of them agreed that their English is poor. But others said that the language they use is Aboriginal. In fact, it simply differs from the proper English-Australian [1]. This study discovered that the attitude affects the speakers

in using their language. The speakers who realize their weaknesses in language use probably will improve their attitudes and not for the speakers who do not. In other words, the attitude reflects the tendency of someone on an object.

Correspondingly, Bartlet quoted by Garo reminded that attitude is a complex state of personal and social psychological conditions involving the characteristics of cognitive activity. Motivation, interest, and values interact with attitudes leading and determining the cognitive activities that are meaningful, interesting, and/or familiar overall vary from different contexts [2]. Therefore, attitude is also basically influenced by social condition becoming the medium for everyone. Holmes confirmed that language is strongly influenced by social and political factors concerning the policy of language use agreement that should consider the acceptability of the language within its speaker society [3].

These views suggest that language attitude refers to the perspective of a person or group of speakers on a language. Jenkins who studied the attitudes towards the use of English accents by its participants. Every participant expressed a different opinion. Some admitted that the accent they used was far from perfect and wanted to improve it and some thought that the different accent they produced was natural as English is their second language [4].

Another study on language attitude was also conducted by Bugel, Santos, and Berger. They reported that students in the Brazilian region who were studying foreign languages generally showed a change of attitude towards the Brazilian Portuguese language. The students learning foreign languages in the school assumed that the language they learned is a right and good language. On the other hand, the language used with accents and local variations at family setting is considered to be full of language errors [5]. This study revealed that changes in language attitudes can also be influenced by education experienced by the society especially in language discipline which further provides wider access to information for the community.

As a result, the above discussion describes that language attitudes can be a positive and negative attitude. A positive attitude is one that places language as a communicating medium, in one hand, that necessarily be used in its actual use. This positive attitude motivates the speakers to maintain and place their language as a primary choice in social interaction. On the other hand, the negative attitude can be described as a careless one on a language. This negative attitude is expressed by the rejection of the speakers to use a language. This will gradually impact on the weakening of language position in the social interaction.

Other research by Vassberg argues that the attitude towards language varieties reflects the user attitude the language involving motivation in choosing language and can have a profound effect on language use [6]. The long-term effect of the language use will definitely have a distinctive impact on a language as language attitude also involves a very complex attitude.

Saville-Troike suggests that language attitudes generally are strongly influenced by the social structure applying in society. Meanwhile, the members of the language community rarely can decide the attitude on a language or language variety. This interests the ethnographers to investigate the relationship between attitude and language [7]. Similarly, this study will explore the maintenance of Gorontalo language by Gorontalo people form language attitude perspective.

1.1 Research Method

This research uses a qualitative approach that explores a particular group or population based on the need for a profound and detailed understanding on the issue being studied. Moreover, this approach also empowers individuals to deliver their stories while minimizes power relation that often appears to the researchers [8].

Furthermore, as the research focuses on the linguistic behaviors of a community, this it uses the ethnographic method. Emzir suggests that ethnography is a type of research focusing on the sociological meaning conducted by closed field observation on sociocultural phenomena [9]. In other words, this study describes the study results of the people's attitudes towards Gorontalo language based on the results of field observation conducted.

In its implementation, this research was conducted by the following procedures suggested by Spradley, namely (1) selecting an ethnographic project; (2) asking ethnographic questions; (3) collecting ethnographic data; (4) making an ethnographic record; (5) analyzing ethnographic data; and (6) writing ethnographic reports [10]. Upon completion of object selection being studied, the preparation of the ethnographic interview guideline was carried out to gather information from informants. The guideline is not used rigidly in data collection because it is possible for other questions to occur during the interviews related to the topic being discussed. The interviews were documented in the form of recordings to assist the data processing.

The data collection was also carried out by tapping the conversations the community being held in various social activities. Tapping is chosen in order to the researcher presence does not cause awkwardness for informants in communicating. With this technique, the conversation being taken place will flow freely from the beginning to the end of the topic being discussed. The data collected were described and analyzed using the SPEAKING grid offered by Hymes [11], [12]. In addition, data analysis was also conducted by referring to the technique of elaborating ethnographic data of communication offered by Saville-Troike.

1.2 Results and Discussion

The data about the attitude of Gorontalo city people on Gorontalo language were collected by observing the field directly and interviews with the informants. The interview was carried out using a tapping technique to bring up answers that led to people's attitudes towards Gorontalo language. The results of data analysis revealed that the people attitude towards Gorontalo language in Gorontalo City can be classified into two groups. The former is a community group showing a positive attitude characterized by a respectful and loyal attitude to the Gorontalo language. This is reflected by using a good Gorontalo language in communication in various settings and conditions, passing down the Gorontalo language to the next generation consciously and voluntarily. The latter is a community group that shows a negative attitude manifested by disrespecting and disloyal attitude to the Gorontalo language. It was indicated by poorly using Gorontalo language and having no interest to inherit the Gorontalo language to the next generation.

The two attitudes towards Gorontalo language can be found in society in various age groups. It was found positive and negative attitudes in adults to old age groups. On the one hand, a positive attitude encourages people to inherit Gorontalo language to the younger generation, especially to their grandchildren. They consciously know that Gorontalo language must be maintained as one of the Gorontalo ethnic identities. This positive attitude evidently

existed in their children ability who understand Gorontalo language and can use it both passively and actively.

The positive attitude of the parents in family setting also impacted on positive attitude ultimately owned by the younger generation in the family. Teenagers and children from such families will understand easily the conversations in Gorontalo language. Then, the teenagers and children finally are able to actively speak in Gorontalo. But such family conditions are rarely found, especially those residing in the city center.

On the other hand, the adults and old people living in the area of Gorontalo City were also found to have a negative attitude towards Gorontalo language. The negative attitude is recognized by the presumption claimed that Gorontalo language is no longer suitable for use by people in urban areas. The demand for interaction with the wider community from various backgrounds is the reason for leaving Gorontalo language which is considered to hamper the assimilation of diverse communities. As a result, there are many youngers have experienced difficulties in using Gorontalo language either passively or actively. This negative attitude of the society on Gorontalo language can be met in all areas of Gorontalo City, especially in the city center.

There are a number of people in Gorontalo City found to have no cares about the Gorontalo language condition. Such people known even were aware of the recent shifting position of Gorontalo language, but they give no effort to maintain it. The reasons are they cannot compete in the rapid changing of time and inevitably have to adapt to the changes in Gorontalo society. Finally, this condition results in a generation who similarly behaved to the Gorontalo language.

Teenagers and children showing no positive attitude towards Gorontalo language tend to consider the Gorontalo language as a language used by ancient people or by parents only. Moreover, teenagers and children were also found to regard Gorontalo language as the language of rural communities and not suitable to use in the city region. This eroding indications of a positive attitude on Gorontalo language commence from the family issues such as it is difficult to find a community of teenagers and children who know the word bapu 'grandfather" and neene "grandmother" as a greeting to the parents (mother and father). Likewise, other greeting expressions also show the characteristics of Gorontalo society.

It implies that the people attitude on Gorontalo language is determined by the habits in the family setting. Starting from the parents' attitude on Gorontalo language which is passed down to the next generation. The observation found that parents communicating in Gorontalo language daily in their family settings will foster a positive attitude of their children on Gorontalo language. On the contrary, children who lived in the family that rarely uses Gorontalo language when talking to children will tend to have negative attitudes on Gorontalo language. This language attitude change is also motivated by the high population mobilization in Gorontalo City. On the one hand, the interaction between local people and immigrant motivates people to use language that can be easily understood together even though on the other hand it creates a negative attitude towards Gorontalo language.

2 CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, the people attitude on Gorontalo language has experienced a decline from positive to negative attitude. This change is noticed by the more pressure Gorontalo language got in the daily life of its society at Gorontalo City. There are rare people found using Gorontalo language in their various social activities. As a result, this change threatens the language maintenance of Gorontalo as the Gorontalo ethnic identity.

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