

Language Shift: In Gayo Society

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ABSTRACT

Language is an activity a group of community members uses to work together as a sound symbol system. Language is also a tool for communicating and identifying oneself. Gayo language is the mother tongue in Central Aceh, one of the languages in Indonesia, where this language must be maintained, and its resilience must be preserved. This research was conducted to see the language shift in the Gayo language among the people who live in Takengon. Research method with descriptive qualitative, interview, and observation approaches. The data analysis techniques we use are data collection, presentation, and conclusion. The conclusion obtained is that for now, there should be no worry about the shift in the Gayo language, but many Gayo language users among young people now speak more Indonesian, even though their families are initially from Gayo, so the less use of Gayo language among them. Because of this, it is feared that a shift in language will occur in an alarming direction in the future.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Gayo language is the language of the majority of people with Gayo ethnicity. This language is one of the languages used in the province of Aceh, namely by people living in Central Aceh, Bener Meriah, Gayo Lues, and parts of Aceh Tenggara, East Aceh, and Aceh Tamiang (Melalatoa 1981; Eades, 2005). At present, the existence of the Gayo language among young speakers is experiencing changes in its use, so the integrity of the language is very doubtful at this time. It is based on a change in the language system related to language contact with other languages starting from the aspect of language elements carried out by bilingual speakers.

The reasons that cause language shifts are the times, the adoption of other languages, and the migration of speakers. Language shifts like this must be taken seriously by maintaining the existing language. The effort to maintain language is loyalty to a language to continue to speak the language, especially the mother tongue (regional), amid the onslaught of other increasingly popular languages. If a language is seldom used and continuously experiences a reduction in the number of speakers so that it loses or runs out of native speakers, that language will surely be doomed to extinction. Grimes (2000) suggests that six symptoms mark the extinction of language in the future, namely (1) a drastic decrease in the number of active speakers, (2) reduced domains of language use, (3) neglect of the mother tongue by young speakers, (4) caring for ethnic identity without using their mother tongue, (5) speakers of the last generation only understand passively

(understanding without speaking), and (6) the extinction of dialects, Creole and cipher languages.

Several studies on language shifts, such as Adisaputera (2009); Jumharia (2015); Sembiring (2015), Berutu (2016), Rina (2017), Hickey (2010), Kandler, Unger, & Steele (2010); Gafaranga (2010); Hornberger & King (2011); Fishman (2012); Myers-Scotton (2013); Ozerk & Jon (2013); Musgrave (2014); Smith-Christmas (2014); Küün (2015); Posel & Jochen (2016); Prochazka & Gero (2017); and Sahril (2018).

The existence of the Gayo language is currently experiencing much mixing with the languages of immigrant populations who occupy Takengon, such as the Javanese, Acehnese, Batak, and Padang. This mixing made it possible for and caused many shifts in the Gayo language within the Takengon community. In addition, many young people from the Gayo tribe are reluctant to use the Gayo language when they finish school overseas. From this explanation, researchers are interested in researching the shift in the Gayo language in Gayo people who live in Takengon.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Language

A language is a tool a group of community members uses to work together, with a system in the form of a sound symbol or a sound symbol originating from the human voice to communicate and identify themselves (Keraf, 1997). Language is also a vowel (a speech sound) in which language is composed of symbols, and each language has its characteristics and uniqueness. Furthermore, other opinions also say that language mirrors culture, customs, and language, distinguishing humans from other creatures (Nababan, 1992). Furthermore, language has several components, including phonemes, morphemes, words, sentences, and phrases.

Language is a means of communication that has several characteristics, including, as a system, language is in the form of symbols, in the form of sounds, language also has arbitrary properties, language has meaning, language also has conventional characteristics, language is also unique, and is universal, productive, varied, dynamic, and humane (Hill, 1958; Wardhaugh, 1977; Wibowo, 2001; Chaer, 2014).

2.2 Language Shift

Language shift is the process of changing the language usually used by indigenous peoples, replacing the old language with a new one (Holmes, 2013). Most of today's society prefers to use a new language to communicate with others. A key driver of language shifts is the decision to abandon languages that are more local or less prestigious, usually because the goal of the shift is languages that are seen as more modern, applicable, or provide access to greater social mobility and economic opportunities (McMahon 1994; Mufwene 2001; Brenzinger 2006). Several other factors driving the language shift are 1) the bilingualism of society, (2) economic development, (3) schools, (4) religion, (5) the environment or living quarters, (6) transportation improvements, (7) communication that can be reached via radio, TV, telephone, and newspapers, 8) There is a new culture (Liliweri, 2003).

2.3 Gayo Language

Gayo language is one of the languages used in Aceh province. Gayo language is the language of the majority of people with Gayo ethnicity who live in Central Aceh, Bener Meriah, Gayo Lues, and some in Southeast Aceh, East Aceh, and Aceh Tamiang (Melalatoa 1981; Eades, 2005). Historically, the Gayo language is a friend of the Toba Batak, Karo Batak, and Acehnese languages.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The method we use to obtain information related to the Gayo language shift is qualitative, with the technique of collecting some information from the original Gayo community. Writers conducted observations and interviews with several people or native speakers of Gayo regarding what caused this Gayo language shift and what examples of words indicate a shift in the Gayo language. We apply several stages in the observation, including interviews, watching, chatting, and taking notes. The data analysis techniques we use are data collection, presentation, and conclusion.

4. FINDINGS

4.1 Interview Result

When conducting the interviews, many people still used the original Gayo language in communicating, but not a few had made many shifts to their Gayo language. Some children do not know the meaning of the original Gayo language. There is one who says that the Gayo language is often spoken in the art and culture of the Gayo people, namely *didong*. From this work, many young people live in Takengon but do not know what the *syekh* words *didong* mean. It proves that not all young people currently know the meaning of the Gayo language.

One of the Gayo people stated that speech in Gayo language culture is getting more advanced with the times, the less often young people use good speech in language. Among the younger generation today, there is a change in the lexicon because many feel embarrassed when using spoken words as a means of communication at this time.

4.2 Observation Results

Based on the observations made by the author of interviews with Gayo people, especially in the Takengon area, we can conclude that Takengon people whose parents are over 60 still use their original Gayo language without any shift. However, middle-aged people still use the original Gayo language, but there has been a slight shift in how they use it. Moreover, the youth, or the current generation, mostly use Indonesian as their language of communication. Even at home with their families, they have mixed their language in communicating. We can see evidence of a shift in the Gayo language from the language lexicon due to addition, subtraction, or loss.

Examples of words such as calling *ama* mean father at this time. Maybe they still exist, but not everyone uses them anymore, and more people use the words *ayah*, *papa*, or *bapak*. Moreover, there are several examples of Gayo language shifts in word forms, such as:

Table 1. Gayo language shift

Old Gayo language	The Shift
Keletek	Selop
Raneh	Leme
Singah Mulo	Mari Mo
Ules	Opoh Jebel
Tengkep	Jendela
Mentarong	Memasak
Parabuang	Gudang

5. CONCLUSION

The shift in language occurred due to several factors, including cross-marriage and movement from one ethnic group to another. The times were advancing, so people preferred to use foreign languages because, according to him, this was one of the current trends. Gayo language is one of the regional languages originating from Takengon. Many youths use coarse Gayo language compared to smooth Gayo language, causing a shift in the Gayo language. It needs to be considered by all parties seriously to avoid a shift in the Gayo language in an increasingly worrying direction.

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