

The Communicative Accommodation of Chinese in Singkawang

Mitra Wulandari

Postgraduate of French Language Education, Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia, Jl. Dr. Setiabudhi No. 229, Bandung,
Indonesia
mitra_wldr@student.upi.edu

Keywords: Communication Accommodation, Chinese, Language Contact.

Abstract: In multilingual societies, each speaker should be able to choose the appropriate language when communicating with others. This research aims to describe the language contact between Chinese society and local residents in Singkawang as a town where three big and strong ethnics lived. One of the ways to understand cultural and language integration is by using communication accommodation approach of Howard Giles who divided it into convergence and divergence. The data were collected by using observation method by applying uninvolved conversation observation technique. This research results in a conclusion that the Chinese people in Singkawang tend to decrease and increase their communicative distance. They are able to accommodate their Khek language with Malay or Indonesian language to gain social acceptance and avoid an ethnic conflict. They keep their mother tongue as well as identity and adapt well.

1 INTRODUCTION

Recognizing the complexity of Indonesia with its cultural richness and its local languages, we are particularly interested in the integration of multi-ethnic and multicultural societies. The cultural contact has always led us to the language. Furthermore, in social diversity, the majority group is often influenced by the minority to integrate.

In a migration, people have left their country, their village and their families by investing so much hope and doing so much sacrifice (Cohen-Emerique, 1989). They are eager not only to develop and improve their economic status but also to be ready for diving into a new society. The multilingual society might appear because of migration too (Sumarsono and Partana, 2004). There are two types of migration. The first is the population that extends to other areas that have been occupied by other groups and has controlled the small socio-cultural groups that were already there. Second, a small number of ethnic minorities enter the territory that is already under the control of another cultural group. Immigrants who enter the territory of a particular country usually come by bringing their language to increase the number of multilingual in the area like the Chinese in Singkawang.

The Chinese people have spread in Indonesia since a very long time ago. Most of them become merchants. As a matter of fact, historical Chinese communities can be found elsewhere in Indonesia. The evidence exists in Palembang in southern Sumatra, the Chinese presence that dates back at least to the fourteenth century (Wiradikarta, 2015). In the province of West Kalimantan (west of Borneo), the Chinese formed a *kongsi* in the 1770s, a clan-based association in the Chinese mining diaspora who powerful enough to qualify them self as "The Republic of Lanfang". In 1750, Chinese immigrants arrived massively in West Kalimantan when the King of Sambas (the Malay) allowed them to mine in Montrado.

We note, however, differences names founded during the Soeharto era, government, media, and society called "Chinese" minorities with negative connotations (Tan, 2008). Then, during the era of Habibie, people called these immigrants with the name "Tionghoa". Owing to Abdurahman Wahid, now we are freer to call the Chinese or Tionghoa to reduce discrimination.

The Malay, Dayaknese and other local inhabitants of Borneo are spread in the big cities and other villages in Kalimantan. However, the largest concentration of Chinese populations is in Singkawang that reaches up to 50%. These new

populations are Hakka or Khek. We classify two types of Chinese in Singkawang, *Cina Peranakan* and *Cina Totok*. *Cina Peranakan* in Kalimantan are those who born from mixed marriages between Chinese immigrants and local residents. On the other hand, *Cina Totok* were born from purely Chinese parents.

The previous study focuses on how language accommodation in the commercial sphere of Javanese-Chinese-Arabic ethnics community in Pekalongan (Adyana and Fathur, 2016). The result above shows that the form of language selection in the commercial sphere of Javanese-Chinese-Arabic ethnics community in Pekalongan are single language, code switching and code-mixing and the pattern of language accommodation are divergence and convergence. Even though this present study did not come from similar situation as in Pekalongan, in this case, Singkawang as one of two big cities in West Kalimantan becomes a good example to describe the transformation of culture and language because it has three large and strong ethnicities; Dayaknese, Malay, and Chinese living together in harmony. This second town is also known as the capital city of Sambas Regency, so Malay language used there has Sambas dialect.

The question is now arise, how are the Chinese people accommodate their language in Singkawang? In terms of language diversity, approaches vary according to the place that reflects its history and tradition. It can be understood by conducting research on the theory of communication accommodation.

The communication accommodation as a set of choices, complex and contextual alternatives in the ubiquitous conversation also *vis-à-vis* that could avoid the dissociation of conversation, on the other hand, all code models or language selections in accommodation strategies related to belief, attitude and socio-cultural conditions (Coupland et al., 1991). Giles also found that theories of accommodation pragmatically concern, in particular, the understanding of relational alternatives, development, difficulties and outcomes in medical, clinical and care environments; strategic options in legal discourse; the alignment of broadcasters with their audiences; secondary language learning processes and acculturation in an inter-ethnic context; and switching code in a bilingual community organizational framework.

The switching code occurs particularly in a bilingual community as regularities of the alternate use of two or more languages within a conversation that can vary considerably between speech

communities (Auer, 1998). Verbal communication between the speakers opens the process of negotiating the language. This happens in Singkawang where the Chinese people there can speak more than one language in daily activities.

2 METHODS

As it has been stated in previous discussion, this study is devotes to find on how are the Chinese people accommodate their language in Singkawang. Through a qualitative study, the researcher used narrative research design which according to Craswell, used to explore individual stories to describe people's lives (Bungin, 2007). If the researcher wants to tell the story of one or two individuals, the researcher may use the narrative design to describe the lives of individuals and others, collect and stories about individual lives, and write narratives about their experiences.

In this study, the main resource for data collection is from the researcher's observation (participant observer) at a Chinese shop. The characteristics of the participants for this study are purposely the Chinese family who live in Singkawang of West Kalimantan. This family consists of wife (48 years old) and husband (46 years old) who speak Malay and Indonesian fluently. Their three children are not part of this research. As a participant observer, the researcher find also two Malays who came to the shop. Technique used in data collection is *simak bebas libat cakap* (uninvolved conversation observation technique). The researcher does not involve directly, just observe and listen to the subjects where the dialogue occurs (Mahsun, 2005).

In analyzing the accommodation of language used by Chinese, researcher used the theory of Howard Giles who divide the communication accommodation in to convergence and divergence.

3 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Not only verbal, any kind of nonverbal form of communication can also be observed as language accommodation. Convergence, on the other hand, is a strategy whereby individuals adapt to each other's communicative behavior such as accent, rhythm, speech rate, pause, phonological variants, smile, or even gaze (Coupland et al., 1991). Convergence refers to the positive attitude shown by a speaker to

the listener by adjusting the characteristics of his language (pronunciation, accent, vocabulary, structure) so that he is understood and accepted (Jendra, 2010). For example, a mother who talks to her child by lowering her voice or the teacher who simplifies her explanation to her learners to make them understood.

Then, Giles said that divergence is the term used to describe how speakers accentuate speech and nonverbal differences between themselves and others. Like convergence, divergence can take many forms, verbal and non-verbal. To identify opportunities where people change their registry by repeating something that is expressed by their partners - not as a formulation presented as a verification of understanding - but rather as a tactic to maintain integrity, distance, and identity without being misunderstood.

The concept of convergence and divergence here is intended for social adaptation so communication can be established. The purpose of accommodation is to improve the effectiveness of a conversation, reduce the social distance, create a good relationship, eliminate the stigma and also show the politeness (Ni Wayan, 2015). As the result, it will produce a variety of language because each one tries to accommodate other speakers. In this study, the language variations are known as Sambas Malay Dialect and Chinese Dialect Khek (Djarot et al., 2014).

Chinese staple foods are rice and vegetables, which they earn from Malay people. When they want to eat pork they will buy it from Dayaknese people. Their population grew and they began to cultivate, fish, gather up, craft and finally trade until now. Different with Chinese in Java that also absorbs the language and Javanese cultures, Chinese people here really hold their ancestor culture and speak Khek in daily life.

3.1 The Communicative Approach Towards Accommodation of Language

Context:

A Malay man (29 years old) comes to buy snacks in the shop. The seller is a Chinese man (46 years old).

Data 1 :

A Malay man: "Dah Ke.. itu jak.. berape smue?"

(Meaning: It's all Sir, how much does it cost?)

A Chinese man: "Limak sengah aa."

(Meaning: Five thousands and five hundred rupiahs)

A Malay man: "Niah..."

(Meaning: Here you go)

A Chinese man: "Kamsia"

(Meaning: Thank you)

Attitude Shown:

A Chinese man as seller speaks in Sambas Malay Dialect with his buyer. Although he tried to use the same language with his buyers, he replied by saying thank you in Khek language. It happens because he knows this buyer well. In certain circumstances we can see that the Chinese reflect divergence to show their identity in a familiar situation without any pressure. The Malay man call the seller with *Ké* which taken from the word *Toke* that means 'Sir'.

Context:

A Malay boy (15 years old) comes to buy a sachet of laundry detergent. The seller is a 48-year-old Chinese woman.

Data 2:

A Malay boy: "Berape Nyah ?"

(Meaning: How much does it cost Madam?)

A Chinese woman: "Dua ribu limak ratus aa."

(Meaning: Two thousands and five hundred rupiahs).

A Malay boy: "Nda'an ade Nyah limak ratusnye."

(Meaning: Madam, i don't have five hundred rupiahs)

A Chinese woman: "Nda ape."

(Meaning: It is ok)

Attitude Shown:

Nyah is taken from the word *Mak Nyah* that means Madam and the sound *aa* here shows the Chinese accent. In this communication, the Chinese woman shows us the convergence in order to make the dialogue and the transactions between them easier to understand.

Because the Chinese are immigrants, it is rational that they adapt well to the level of language in relation to convergence. But it is important to point out that they also do code-switching when they go out in from their Chinese community. For example, there are many Chinese people living in a house with a shop in the front of their house. One can find the Chinese children play in the store with their mother or other members of the family, they communicate in Chinese Dialect Khek. Concerning the Chinese is 50% of the population, the use of the Khek language is very dominant. Even Indonesian language is almost never been heard in their daily lives. Chinese people here also use the Sambas Malay Dialect that is similar with Indonesian. They often think that they are speaking Indonesian language but in reality, they use Malay because, in Singkawang, the Malay

Sambas language is the daily language except in the context of education where formal Indonesian language is preferred.

Furthermore, the language preservation is a situation where a linguistic community can maintain or continue to use its language from generation to generation, although there is a condition that could assign to switch to another language (Jendra, 2010). In maintaining a language, this linguistic community refuses to use another language. There are several factors that affect the situation in language perseverance such as a large number of language users; the concentration of the inhabitants; identity and cultural pride; the best economic condition (Jendra, 2010). We can conclude that Chinese people in Singkawang take all these factors to maintain their integrity. So it is almost impossible to eliminate the Khek language in Singkawang due to the loyalty of users of this language. The way they can socialize without losing their integrity is by accommodating their communication, whether in convergence or divergence form.

4 CONCLUSIONS

The communication accommodation is a theory in sociolinguistics that aims to explain why people change their words, or why they become more or less similar with the partners in conversations. Based on the discussion provided previously, the Chinese in Singkawang accommodate the Khek language with Malay or Indonesian language through convergence and divergence to gain social acceptance and avoid multi-ethnic conflict. One can see that the Chinese people keep their mother tongue well as an identity but they also try to adapt to the other languages.

As part of the accommodation, Singkawang Chinese people use the language of Malay and Indonesia language with a Chinese accent in their social interaction with other ethnic groups. For example when the Malay goes to the Chinese store. The Chinese tries to speak using the local language but also with the Chinese accent.

Social contact involves two or more different ethnic groups. Thus, it is essential that all social actors should make sufficient cultural solidarity to support harmony between them. If social adaptation is strong (through linguistic adaptation), this will form conditions of harmony. But on the contrary, if social adaptation is weak, the condition will not be harmonious. To describe this phenomenon, we may observe the accommodation of culture and language

in Chinese people in Singkawang in general. Conclusion from all data provided in this study, the Chinese people are still Chinese even if they were born and lived in Singkawang. They maintain their culture and language and adapt well with another ethnic. We also hope that the next research will talk about accommodation in particular and more specific in dealing with the linguistic point of view (dialects).

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The writer would like to thank everyone who has contributed to the realization of this research.

REFERENCES

- Adyana, S., Fathur, R., 2016. Akomodasi Bahasa pada Masyarakat Kota Pekalongan Etnis Jawa-Tionghoa-Arab dalam Ranah Perdagangan. *Seloka: Jurnal Pendidikan Bahasa dan Sastra Indonesia*. 5, pp.88-95.
- Auer, P., 1998. *Code-Switching in Conversation: Language, Interaction and Identity*, Routledge. London.
- Bungin, B., 2007. *Penelitian Kualitatif: Komunikasi, Ekonomi, Kebijakan Publik, dan Ilmu Sosial lainnya*. Prenada Media Group. Jakarta.
- Djarot, M., Priyadi, A. T., Syam, C., 2014. Pilihan Bahasa Siswa SMA Taruna Bumi Khatulistiwa Kabupaten Kubu Raya Kalimantan Barat (Kajian Sociolinguistik). *Jurnal Pendidikan dan Pembelajaran*.
- Cohen-Emerique, M., 1989. Travailleurs sociaux et migrants. La reconnaissance identitaire dans le processus d'aide. *Chocs de cultures: Concepts et enjeux pratiques de l'interculturel*. pp.77-134.
- Coupland, J., Coupland, N., Giles, H., 1991. Accommodation theory. communication, context and consequences. *Contexts of Accommodation. Cambridge & Paris: Cambridge University Press & Editions de la maison des sciences de lâ Azhomme*.
- Jendra, M. I. I., 2010. *Sociolinguistics: the study of societies' languages*, Graha Ilmu. Yogyakarta.
- Mahsun, M.S., 2005. *Metode penelitian bahasa: tahapan strategi, metode dan tekniknya*, PT Raja Grafindo Persada.
- Ni Wayan, S., 2015. Perilaku Bahasa Diaspora Orang Bali di Jawa Timur: Kajian Sociolinguistik. *Jurnal Keilmuan Bahasa, Sastra, dan Pengajarannya*. 1(1).
- Leo, S., 1999. *Etnis Tionghoa dan Pembangunan Bangsa*, Pustaka LP3ES. Jakarta.
- Sumarsono, Partana, P., 2007. *Sociolinguistik*, Sabda bekerjasama dengan Pustaka Pelajar.
- Tan, M. G., 2008. *Etnis Tionghoa di Indonesia: kumpulan tulisan*, Yayasan Obor Indonesia.
- Wiradikarta, D., 2015. *Les Chinois d'Indonésie*.