

## CHAPTER NINE

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

#### 9.1 Introduction

The chapter provides an overall perspective of the entire study which was an investigation into the language choice of the Dayak Bidayuh undergraduates from the rural and urban areas belonging to the dialect groups of Bau-Jagoi, Bukar-Sadong and Biatah. This chapter begins with a general discussion of the main thrusts of the study. The data analysis procedures and findings are summarised and suggestion for future research will be made.

#### 9.2 Summary of language situation

The language situation in Sarawak may be described as multilingual and broadly diglossic or even polyglossic. In the city of Kuching it is even more obvious with the numerous ethnic groups who migrated from the rural areas in order to look for modern lifestyle, better education and employment and among them are the Dayak Bidayuhs. The Dayak Bidayuhs in the rural areas use Bidayuh dialects in interactions. The languages used in daily interactions among the urban Dayak Bidayuhs are Bidayuh, Sarawak Malay, Bahasa Melayu and English.

There are 29 Bidayuh sub-dialects which are grouped under four main dialects namely Bau-Jagoi, Bukar-Sadong, Biatah and Salako -Larra. The groupings of the 29 sub-dialects are made based on the four main districts in the Bidayuh Belt namely Bau, Serian, Kuching-Rural (sub-districts of Padawan and Siburan) and Lundu respectively. There is no common Bidayuh language and the Bidayuhs from the four main dialect groups generally do not understand one another.

The common languages used in the city of Kuching and its outskirts (Samarahan Division) are Sarawak Malay, Mandarin, Iban, Bidayuh, Bahasa Melayu and English. The use of the different codes in the urban areas is determined by the higher density of a certain population belonging to a particular group. For instance, in the city of Kuching, the Malays are the majority and the code used is Sarawak Malay. Sarawak Malay is also used by the urban Bidayuhs with Ibans and other Dayaks.

### **9.3 Overview of the study**

The thrust of this sociolinguistic study was to determine the use of different dialects and languages in two major domains among the multilingual Dayak Bidayuh undergraduates in Sarawak. The home and university domains were chosen as it was the aim of this study to establish the extent of the use of the heritage Bidayuh dialects, Bahasa Melayu, English and Sarawak Malay among the rural and urban Bidayuh undergraduates.

A total of 213 Dayak Bidayuh undergraduates studying at UiTM Samarahan participated in this study. They belonged to three main Bidayuh groups namely Bau-Jagoi, Bukar-Sadong and Biatah. Out of the total of 213 undergraduates, 123 of them were from the urban areas of Kuching and 90 were from the rural areas in Bau, Serian and Kuching rural districts. Out of the total of 213 undergraduates, 120 Bidayuh were female and 93 Bidayuh male undergraduates. Most of the Bidayuh undergraduates in this study were Roman Catholics and Anglicans. The two Bidayuh Muslim undergraduates in the university were excluded in this study because they were identified as Malays in their national registration cards.

The main reason for choosing Bidayuh undergraduates at UiTM was because the university had the most number of Bidayuh undergraduates compared to other institutions in Sarawak at the time this study was conducted. Moreover, the researcher was a lecturer in the university and being an insider it was easy to establish friendship with the respondents for tape recording, interviewing and observing the patterns of language choice among the Dayak Bidayuh undergraduates.

Joshua Fishman's (1968; 1972) domain concept formed the main framework of this descriptive study. The home domain was investigated for the Dayak Bidayuh's interaction with different generation of family members at home. The university domain was investigated for intra and across dialect groups with Bidayuh undergraduates in the university.

While Giles and Smith (1979) used the Theory of Accommodation which focussed on language accommodation among people of different ethnicities, this study extended the concept to include the extent of Bidayuh i.e. the heritage dialects, Bahasa Melayu i.e. the national language (a language used as the medium of instruction in school), English and the use of Sarawak Malay (a local Malay dialect) in the home and university domains.

In this study, the notion of *accommodation* refers to the Dayak Bidayuh undergraduates accommodating depending on who they were talking to. The term *accommodation* was borrowed from Giles and Smith (1979) which meant the adoption of the language preference of the speech partner. Language accommodation in this study refers to the choices made by the Dayak Bidayuh undergraduates to adjust the code used when interacting with family members at home and peers in the university in order to facilitate communication. The Bidayuh undergraduates had to accommodate by using dominant languages such as Bahasa Melayu and Sarawak Malay. By using the term accommodation, the researcher has shown the sensitivity to code selected for discourse at home and in the university by the rural and urban Bidayuh undergraduates.

Since the Bidayuh undergraduates had a verbal repertoire of Bahasa Melayu, English, Bidayuh and Sarawak Malay, the aim of combining the domain concept with the Speech Accommodation Theory was to determine the extent of Bidayuh, Sarawak Malay, Bahasa Melayu and English used by the Dayak

Bidayuh undergraduates at home, in intra and across dialect groups in the university.

Gumperz (1982) talks of a discourse function of code-switching, that is, the *personalization* function which was most relevant in this study. Under this function the speaker played upon the connotation of a 'we' code to create conversational effect. In other words, the speaker was seen to create a desired meaning through code-switching. In this study the desired meaning was seen through the range of reasons that made a speaker selected a particular code. The real voices cited from the interviews helped to explain why the Bidayuh undergraduates used a certain language to accomplish intended actions.

The research used a combination of both qualitative and quantitative approaches to triangulate the data. The macro perspective of this study made use of a 55-item questionnaire which was developed with reference to studies done by Roksana Bebe Abdullah (2002), Sankar (2004), David (1996) and Gal (1979). The 55 multiple choice questions provided the background information of the respondents, inquired about language choice when talking to different generation of family members at home and with Bidayuh undergraduates from the same and other dialect groups in the university. The data from the 213 respondents from the questionnaire was analysed for frequency counts and percentages of the various codes used in the two main domains.

The micro perspective of this study used transcription of 56 conversations, observations and open-ended interviews. A total of 24 Bidayuh undergraduates became respondents for the home recordings, 28 Bidayuh undergraduates for intra dialect group discourse and 66 for intergroup discourse. There were more for across dialect group interactions because the absence of a common Bidayuh language often showed non-consistency in language used even with the same interlocutors. The data for the transcriptions were analysed by identifying the code/s used in the utterances made by the rural and urban Bidayuh respondents. Frequency counts and percentages of sentences in the utterances made using the different codes were calculated. Both the quantitative and qualitative findings indicated similar patterns of language choice at home and in the university among the Bau-Jagoi, Bukar-Sadong and Biatah undergraduates.

The sociolinguistic question of ‘why’ different language choice patterns were preferred by the rural and urban Dayak Bidayuh undergraduates were successfully answered through open-ended interviews with the 24 respondents at home, 24 in intra and 35 across dialect group interactions in the university. The open-ended interviews were conducted when the recordings were played back to the interlocutors and reasons for the respondents’ language choices were obtained.

Observations with field notes of language used by the respondents with other Bidayuh undergraduates were made in the university continuously during the three year period of this study. A total of 24 home visits were made by the

researcher during Gawai Dayak, Christmas, Easter and other occasions to observe the patterns of language used by the Dayak Bidayuh undergraduates and the researcher did not inform the respondents what exactly he was observing.

#### **9.4 Summary of findings**

The major thrust of this study was to investigate the language choice of the rural and urban Bidayuh undergraduates belonging to the Bau-Jagoi, Bukar-Sadong and Biatah dialect groups. There were differences in language choice between the rural and urban Dayak Bidayuh undergraduates belonging to the three dialect groups in the home and university domains.

Family relationships were strengthened when the educated Bidayuh undergraduates accommodated and shifted to the preferred language choice of family members at home. All the rural and urban Bidayuh undergraduates used stand-alone Bidayuh when speaking to their grandparents. The rural Bidayuh undergraduates used stand-alone Bidayuh with their parents and the non-school going siblings. When speaking to educated siblings, the rural Bidayuh undergraduates code-switched using more Bidayuh and less of the other codes at home.

In contrast, the urban Bidayuh undergraduates when communicating with parents and siblings preferred to code-switch using more Bidayuh and less of

the other codes at home. In the micro analysis, the data transcribed from the twenty four recorded conversations at home also indicated very clearly that the rural Bidayuhs used more Bidayuh compared to the urban Bidayuh undergraduates with family members.

From the questionnaire analysis, it showed that in intra dialect group interactions 100% of the rural Bidayuh undergraduates selected stand-alone Bidayuh as their main choice when making Bidayuhs from the same dialect group comfortable, asking for favours, getting respect, telling secrets, scolding and praying silently.

In contrast, for the urban undergraduates it showed that in intra-dialect group discourse, code-switches using more Bidayuh and less of the other codes was the main language choice pattern when sending voice mails, e-mails, SMS, making Bidayuhs of the same group comfortable, asking for favours, teasing and scolding.

When showing power to Bidayuh undergraduates from the same dialect group, 100% of the urban Bidayuh undergraduates and 70% of the rural Bidayuh undergraduates selected English as their main choice. Among the urban undergraduates stand-alone Bidayuh was only a popular choice for the majority when getting respect and telling secrets to Bidayuh undergraduates from the same dialect group.

In the qualitative analysis, the conversations analysed indicated clearly that Bidayuh was the main language used by both the rural and urban Bidayuh undergraduates in intra dialect group interactions in the university. While stand-alone Bidayuh was the main pattern used by the 15 rural Bidayuh undergraduates in intra dialect group interactions, code-switching using more Bidayuh and less Sarawak Malay was the main pattern used by the 13 urban Bidayuh undergraduates in intra dialect group interactions in the university. By examining the language used, the patterns which emerged indicated the rural Bidayuh undergraduates were using more Bidayuh than the urban Bidayuh undergraduates in intra dialect group discourse in the university (see Table 7.2 and Table 7.3).

The results of the survey also showed clearly that across dialect group interactions, the rural Bidayuh undergraduates selected Bahasa Melayu as their main choice compared to urban Bidayuhs who selected Sarawak Malay as their main choice when sending voice mails, e-mails, SMS, asking for favours, making Bidayuhs from other dialect groups comfortable, praying aloud, study group discussions and discussing religious matters.

In the qualitative analysis across dialect groups, stand-alone Bahasa Melayu emerged as the main pattern used by the 28 rural Bidayuh undergraduates, followed by code-switches using more Bahasa Melayu and less Bidayuh, English and Sarawak Malay. In contrast, stand-alone Sarawak Malay was the main pattern used by the urban Bidayuh undergradates across dialect followed

by code- switches using more Sarawak Malay and less Bidayuh, English and Bahasa Melayu. The patterns which emerged indicated that Bidayuh dialects were less used by the Bidayuh undergraduates across dialect group interactions in the university.

### **9.5 Summary of reasons for language choice**

The main reason for the Dayak Bidayuh undergraduates selecting a particular code when addressing a certain speech partner/s was to accommodate to the latter's choice of code. The Dayak Bidayuh undergraduates had more codes in their linguistic repertoire compared to their grandparents, parents and non-school going siblings.

Language accommodation at home refers to accommodating to the common pattern used by family members during interactions. Therefore, when conversing with the monodialectal grandparents both the rural and urban Bidayuh undergraduates used only stand-alone Bidayuh. When the rural Bidayuh undergraduates spoke with their less educated parents and non-school going siblings only stand-alone Bidayuh was used. The rural Bidayuh undergraduates code-switched using more Bidayuh and less of the other codes when speaking to their educated siblings. In contrast, the main pattern used by the urban Bidayuh undergraduates at home was code-switching using more Bidayuh and less Sarawak Malay and English with their parents and siblings.

The findings showed the rural and urban Bidayuh undergraduates did not speak stand-alone Bidayuh with educated family members at home. Bahasa Melayu and English had encroached into the home domain because of several practical reasons. Firstly, habitual due to use over time, secondly, as common referents for words which do not exist in the Bidayuh dialects and thirdly, to show how educated they were. For example, when talking about matters related to studies and current issues English and Bahasa Melayu referents often emerged due to the above reasons. The Bidayuh undergraduates projected an image of being educated at home when they used English and Bahasa Melayu.

The absence of a common Bidayuh language was the main reason for more dominant codes such as Bahasa Melayu and Sarawak Malay was used across dialect group contact. Bahasa Melayu was used by the rural Bidayuh undergraduates from different dialect groups to accommodate one another. Bahasa Melayu was their medium of instruction in school and the national language of Malaysia. It was also more practical to use Bahasa Melayu as the language was understood by all the Dayak Bidayuh undergraduates.

In contrast, Sarawak Malay was the main code selected by the urban Dayak Bidayuh undergraduates largely due to the influence of the larger linguistic setting. Sarawak Malay is the lingua franca for interethnic communication in the urban areas. Therefore, both Bahasa Melayu and Sarawak Malay were used by the rural and urban Bidayuh undergraduates respectively for practical

convenience in inter dialect group language contact in the absence of a common Bidayuh language.

The Bidayuh undergraduates' identity could be best recognised when the interlocutors used Bidayuh. Therefore, even across dialect group interactions, the Bidayuh undergraduates often used Bidayuh single lexical items in dominant Bahasa Melayu or Sarawak Malay.

From the study, it was obvious that although there existed variations in the Bidayuh dialects, it did not seem to bother the Dayak Bidayuh undergraduates. The Dayak Bidayuh undergraduates could accommodate using any of the four codes namely Bidayuh, Sarawak Malay, Bahasa Melayu and English at home and in the university. The extent of Bidayuh, Sarawak Malay, Bahasa Melayu and English used to accommodate family members and peers in the university showed flexibility of language used by the Dayak Bidayuh undergraduates (see Appendix F for a list of reasons for language choice at home and in the university).

In this research, the researcher focused on identifying the languages choice trends among the Dayak Bidayuh undergraduates and the reasons for their choices. The findings of this research showed that the rural Bidayuh undergraduates were using their heritage dialects more than the urban Bidayuh undergraduates. The dominance of Sarawak Malay in the urban areas was so great that the urban Bidayuh undergraduates were using it at home with siblings

and with other urban Bidayuh undergraduates in intra dialect and inter group discourse in the university.

## **9.6 Suggestion for Further Research**

It is inevitable that an area of interest, which was envisaged during the study, needs further research. There is a need to complement this study which focused on the Dayak Bidayuh undergraduates, by conducting a research to compare the language used by three generations of Bidayuhs in the rural and urban areas. The aim is to investigate if there is any difference in the language choice patterns in intra and across generations among the rural and urban Bidayuhs with a view to determine if they are maintaining or have shifted from their heritage dialects. Since the Bidayuhs are a close knit community in the Bidayuh Belt, it will also be best to use Milroy's (1987) Social Network Theory in order to justify if Milroy's claim that close and dense networks that lead to language maintenance can also be applied to the Dayak Bidayuhs. Future research could also include Bidayuh undergraduates studying in other higher institutions of learning.

## 9.7 Conclusion

The findings of the study are of practical importance, since they raise language planning and policy questions as to the possibility and desirability of measures of language standardization, modernization and maintenance which are, at the same time, relevant for curriculum planning and language teaching. These questions can be extended onto those about the relationship of language and culture with practical implications for national culture policy.

The ultimate reality is that, if there is no common Bidayuh language soon and the Bidayuh dialects are not taught formally in schools, there will be no more agents to reinforce the use of Bidayuh once the older generation has passed away. Although Bidayuh is still the most dominant language used at home by the rural and urban Bidayuh undergraduates and in intra dialect group discourse, the absence of a common Bidayuh language has made Bahasa Melayu and Sarawak Malay the main codes in inter dialect group discourse.

This thesis cannot pretend to be a complete record of language used by the Dayak Bidayuh in Sarawak. Nevertheless, I hope it has made at least a small contribution to our better understanding of language choice among the Bidayuh undergraduates, who represent a section in the Dayak Bidayuh community.