

ABSTRACT

This dissertation describes the language choice patterns of Bidayuh graduates in an urban setting. It demonstrates the interaction between macro-sociological modifications with changes in language choice patterns of the Bidayuh community, an ethnic minority located in East Malaysia. The motivation for the study is driven by the need to ascertain the direction of the changing language choice patterns of its community members, and the extent to which it is threatening the position of the mother tongue. Despite having a population of approximately 170,000 speakers, the Bidayuh language displays characteristics of a “threatened” language. The proximity of the Bidayuh speech community to the capital city, Kuching increases its susceptibility to language shift. The setting of the study, and the complexity of the Bidayuh language situation is in itself have given greater insights into the factors that motivate changes in language choice patterns of multilingual communities.

Data for the study was collected through in-depth interviews with 61 respondents and community leaders, and “participant observation” of their language behavior in daily interactions. Inter-speaker variations in “patterns of choice” at individual and group level show that urban educated Bidayuh are moving away from the mother tongue. The shift to Malay and English correlates with the following speaker variables: mixed parentage, educated parents, and urban upbringing. School experience, socialisation process and language experience in formative years of the educated Bidayuh speakers are contributing factors that have influenced acquisition of various languages and degree of bilingualism

among speakers, which in turn have also dictated their patterns of choice in various domains of language use.

The shift has been motivated by socio-economic reasons, and also by the hegemony of Malay and English in the main domains of language use and various functions these languages fulfill in daily interaction of urban Bidayuh. Shift to major languages is seen as a response to the gradual social cultural transformation of the Bidayuh community which began with the introduction of school in the mid-20th century. Nonetheless, group members have shown to vary in their responses to these changes. Some Bidayuh have retained its use as main language for communication in the family domain but others have also shifted to major languages. The differences in bilingual practice among speakers primarily reflect differences in attitudes towards languages and differences in value orientation among the speakers. Above all, the changing norm of language use in the family domain is due to the rather ambivalent attitude of some speakers towards mother tongue as a symbol of ethnic identity.

ABSTRAK

Kajian ini meneliti pola pemilihan bahasa di kalangan masyarakat Bidayuh di kawasan bandar. Ia memberi huraian tentang perubahan pola pemilihan bahasa dalam komuniti ini dan interaksinya dengan transformasi sosio-ekonomi yang bermula sejak pertengahan abad ke dua puluh. Kajian ini didorong atas keinginan untuk mengetahui punca dan faktor yang menyebabkan berlakunya perubahan pola pemilihan bahasa di kalangan masyarakat Bidayuh, serta mengukur sejauh mana perubahan tersebut mengancam kedudukan bahasa ibunda komuniti ini. Walaupun jumlah penuturnya ramai, iaitu dianggarkan 170,000 orang, ciri-ciri bahasa yang “terancam” ada pada bahasa Bidayuh. Ia semakin terpinggir sebagai bahasa percakapan harian masyarakat penuturnya di kawasan bandar. Kedudukannya yang hampir dengan ibu kota Kuching meningkatkan kecenderungan mereka kepada bahaya anjakan bahasa (language shift). Konteks dan situasi sosiolinguistik komuniti ini agak berbeza daripada kajian yang telah dijalankan di rantau ini. Justeru, dapatan kajian ini menambah pengetahuan kita tentang faktor-faktor yang menyebabkan masyarakat minoriti khususnya masyarakat Bidayuh beralih daripada menuturkan bahasa ibunda.

Data kajian ini telah diperolehi melalui sesi temubual dengan 61 penutur dan ketua masyarakat, serta pemerhatian secara langsung (“participant observation”) terhadap perlakuan bahasa dalam aktiviti harian penuturnya. Variasi pola pemilihan bahasa di kalangan penutur menunjukkan berlakunya anjakan bahasa di kalangan penutur Bidayuh berpendidikan tinggi dalam komuniti ini. Anjakan bahasa kepada bahasa Melayu dan Inggeris berkorelasi dengan beberapa variabel penutur iaitu penutur yang berdarah

campuran, yang mempunyai ibu-bapa yang berpendidikan tinggi dan yang dibesarkan dalam kalangan masyarakat bandar. Pengaruh bahasa sekolah, proses sosialisasi dan pengalaman bahasa sewaktu zaman kanak-kanak dan remaja juga merupakan faktor penyumbang kepada kecekapan menuturkan pelbagai bahasa dan keselesaan menggunakannya dalam interaksi harian mereka. Faktor ini turut mempengaruhi pola penggunaan bahasa individu-individu tersebut.

Anjakan bahasa yang sedang berlaku dalam komuniti ini adalah didorong oleh tuntutan sosio-ekonomi, serta perluasan fungsi dan dominasi dua bahasa utama dalam masyarakat multilingual di Sarawak, iaitu bahasa Melayu dan Inggeris. Proses anjakan bahasa berkait rapat dengan transformasi socio-budaya yang sedang dihadapi oleh komuniti ini. Variasi dalam pola pemilihan bahasa di antara penutur-penutur mencerminkan tindak balas terhadap arus perubahan persekitaraan yang telah bermula sejak pertengahan abad ke-20. Namun, segelintir penutur Bidayuh dalam kajian ini masih mengekalkan bahasa ibunda dalam komunikasi harian dengan ahli keluarga dan dengan penutur sesama dialek, namun majoriti mereka telah beralih kepada bahasa-bahasa utama dan hanya menuturkan bahasa Bidayuh dalam konteks yang terpencil. Dalam erti kata lain, fungsi bahasa Bidayuh telah mengecil di kalangan masyarakatnya yang tinggal di bandar. Secara keseluruhannya, perubahan norma penggunaan bahasa dalam domain kekeluargaan didasari oleh perubahan sikap yang memberi keutamaan kepada bahasa-bahasa utama. Sikap penutur yang kurang pasti terhadap kepentingan mengekalkan bahasa ibunda sebagai sebahagian daripada identiti mereka adalah faktor utama yang menjurus kepada anjakan bahasa dalam komuniti ini.

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