
The Multilingual Practice in a Rural and Urban Setting in Lombok, Indonesia

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Abstract: *The Sasak tribe is categorized as one of the multilingual speakers that exist in Indonesia who speak Bahasa Indonesia and Sasak Language (SL). The SL has two speech levels: Sasak Jamaq (SJ) for the lower level and Sasak Alus (SA) for the upper one. Along with social considerations, people's multilingual practice may differ from urban and rural settings in the Lombok region. This research aims to investigate the multilingual practice along with the factors that influence language choice in educational, casual conversation, and traditional gatherings domains within both rural and urban areas around Lombok. This research used a descriptive qualitative method employing the ethnographic research approach to collect data. Participants were categorized based on specific events that were taking place such as sorong serah events (traditional gatherings), Car-free days (casual conversations), and educational activities on campus. It turns out that the multilingual practice in the two settings (urban and rural) has the same pattern on how SA is becoming extinct. The linguistic endangerment has been caused by the widespread disregard shown by both non-royal descendants and meritocratic households. Furthermore, the limited domain is accessible for usage as a communication tool due to language policy, which incorporates Bahasa Indonesia in numerous formal contexts and excludes SA from school curricula. Furthermore, the domain is the biggest matter in how they choose a language to communicate as well as the topic, interlocutor identities, social status, and politeness.*

INTRODUCTION

Lombok is one of the islands in the eastern part of Indonesia, with 3 million population. The original inhabitants of the island of Lombok are known as the *Sasak tribe*, who are multilingual. They commonly speak Sasak Language (SL) as a local language and Bahasa

Indonesia as an official language. The Sasak people of Lombok, Indonesia, navigate a complex multilingual landscape that is emblematic of their rich cultural heritage and sociolinguistic dynamics. Central to this linguistic milieu is the Sasak language, which encompasses several speech levels, including Sasak Alus, a refined register used to convey respect and social hierarchy (Clynes, 2005). The SL has speech level categorized as Sasak Alus (SA) for the higher level and Sasak Jamaq (SJ) for the lower one (Wahyuningsih, 2016: 1). This social class is strongly influenced by the case system that has been embodied in the Sasak culture. The case system seems pretty similar to the Javanese and Balinese languages (Wilian, 2006). For example, the SA must be used for people with the highest caste called *menak*, and SJ for lower caste called *sepangan* or non-*menak* (the servants of *menak*) (Meyerhoff, 2015: 139). However, there were also those mentioned three levels, as reported by Abhari (2009: 29) called the primary language (*Sasak Alus*), intermediate language (*Sasak Madie*), and coarse language (*Sasak Jamaq*). These language divisions are correlated to the three layers of the Sasak case system, noble group (*Menak*), middle class, and non-*Menak*. In terms of the SL used, Sasak traditional culture assigned that the above social-language pairs were ideal multilingual practices.

Beyond their native tongue, the Sasak community is proficient in Bahasa Indonesia, the national language that functions as the lingua franca across Indonesia (Sneddon, 2003). This bilingualism is driven by historical and educational factors, with Bahasa Indonesia serving as the medium of instruction in schools and the language of administration and wider communication. The adoption of Bahasa Indonesia has been instrumental in fostering national unity while simultaneously posing challenges to the maintenance of indigenous languages like Sasak. Moreover, the Sasak linguistic repertoire often includes regional languages such as Balinese and Javanese, reflecting historical migration patterns and inter-island cultural interactions (Foley, 1997). These languages contribute to the vibrant linguistic mosaic of Lombok, where multilingualism is a testament to the community's adaptability and resilience.

Understanding the multilingual practices of the Sasak people provides valuable insights into the interplay between language, culture, and identity. It highlights the importance of linguistic diversity and the need for policies that support the preservation of minority languages in the face of globalization and national integration efforts (Crystal, 2000). This complex linguistic scenario underscores the Sasak community's efforts to balance the preservation of their linguistic heritage with the practicalities of participating in a broader national and global context.

As time went by, the language shift towards Sasak speech levels gradually changed among the people of Sasak due to the language choice. The choice consideration might not only be the caste systems but there are more social considerations that people might consider in their multilingual practice. Apart from that, the multilingual practice might be different from Urban and rural settings around the region of Lombok, which the author attempts to discuss. The discussion of this research will address some domains that may still exist in both areas, such as educational, casual conversation, and traditional gathering. Some considerations of selecting these domains are to provide a new scope of research about the bilingual practice in Lombok as it is still rarely popping up in academic discussions. Apart from that, the pedagogical contribution of this research raises an awareness of the condition of the Sasak language that is affected by school/curriculum policy which erased the *muatan local* subject at primary school. Furthermore, research on multilingual practice brings more creative and better solutions to the effort of linguists to prolong the existence of a language as one of cultural treasures. Therefore, this research is subjected to investigate the multilingual practice of Sasak people in the urban and rural areas around Lombok and the factors that influence the language choice of the Sasak people

repertoire.

THEORITICAL FRAMEWORK

The world's population can indeed be able to speak one language, but some specific situations like domains, topics, and interlocutors might emerge a wide range of language usage. Whenever multilingual speakers meet different situations, a decision has to be made about whether these languages should be used. Specifically, Dweik and Qawar (2015) believe that language choice is considered a careful process of producing appropriate words, speech levels, phrases, and sentences. Relating to the factors that motivate individuals to choose a specific language, this phenomenon attracts the attention of many scholars around the world. Fasold (1990) specified the factors that influence the multilingual speaker to use certain languages such as close friends, home, commerce or trade interactions, and government agencies. Ferrer and Sankoff (2004) found that political circumstances between progressive nationalists are profoundly affecting the language choice among secondary students in some regions in Spain. They emphasize that this circumstance emerges a dominant language use among the people which later becomes the new factor of language choice. It is because the dominant language provides greater advantages, economic benefits, social network expansion, and better opportunities. In this view, Piller (2000) identified that the major language used in multilingual society can outperform the minority language which influences people's language choices because it benefits social networking. A bit different perspective from Thomason and Kaufman (2001), the language choice is a part of the speaker's stylish repertoire which can be changed depending on language input and feeling. From these perspectives, the author believes that language choice is a very subjective thing that cannot be generalized since language, culture, and interaction patterns are dissimilar among regions. However, it might be different from the language phenomenon is happening in Lombok, Indonesia which is considered as a multicultural community. They might not be influenced by the dominant language nor the trading activities. Lombok, an island in Indonesia, is a rich tapestry of cultures and languages. The multilingual landscape of Lombok is influenced by its historical trade routes, diverse ethnic groups, and socio-economic interactions. This study review explores a glance at multilingual practices in Lombok, examining historical context, linguistic diversity, language use in various domains, and the implications for education and social integration.

Historical context

Lombok's multilingualism is rooted in its history as a crossroads of different cultures. The island has been influenced by traders from India, China, and the Arab world, as well as by European colonial powers. These interactions have introduced various languages and dialects to the island, contributing to its linguistic diversity.

Pre-Colonial Period: Before colonial influence, Lombok was part of regional trading networks, facilitating the exchange of languages and cultures. The indigenous Sasak people primarily spoke Sasak, but interactions with Balinese, Javanese, and other Austronesian languages were common (Vickers, 2013). **Colonial Period:** During Dutch colonial rule, the introduction of the Malay language as a lingua franca further diversified the linguistic landscape. Dutch, as the language of administration and education, also left an imprint (Kahin, 1952). **Post-Independence:** After Indonesia's independence, Bahasa Indonesia was promoted as the national language to unify the diverse archipelago, including Lombok. However, local languages and dialects remained in use for daily communication (Sneddon, 2003).

Linguistics diversity

Lombok's multilingualism includes the use of several local and regional languages. The primary languages spoken on the island are: Sasak: The most widely spoken language, with several dialects reflecting regional variations within the island (Suharti, 2017). Bahasa Indonesia: The national language, used in formal settings such as education, government, and media (Sneddon, 2003). Balinese: Spoken by the Balinese minority, particularly in the western parts of Lombok (Artawa, 2014). Other Languages: Minor languages and dialects include Javanese, Arabic (among the Muslim community), and various other Indonesian regional languages (Cohn & Ravindranath, 2014).

Implication for educational and social integration

The multilingual environment in Lombok presents both challenges and opportunities for education and social integration. **Educational Outcomes:** Research suggests that initial literacy in a child's first language can lead to better educational outcomes. Efforts to integrate Sasak and other local languages into early education could enhance comprehension and retention rates (Lauder, 2008). **Cultural Preservation:** Balancing the use of Bahasa Indonesia with local languages helps preserve cultural identity and heritage. Language preservation programs and local language media are essential in maintaining linguistic diversity (Cohn & Ravindranath, 2014). **Social Integration:** Multilingualism fosters social integration by enabling communication across different ethnic and cultural groups. However, it also requires policies that support linguistic diversity while promoting national unity (Sneddon, 2003). Lombok's multilingual practice reflects its rich cultural history and diverse population. While Bahasa Indonesia plays a crucial role in unifying the nation, the use of local languages like Sasak and Balinese is vital for cultural preservation and effective communication within communities. Future research and policy development should focus on enhancing multilingual education and supporting linguistic diversity to foster social cohesion and educational success in Lombok. Based on the above review and explanation, it is deemed necessary to deeply investigate the practice of multilingualism in the rural and urban settings around Lombok, which specifically scrutinized some specific domains, such as casual conversation, traditional gathering, and education settings.

RESEARCH METHODS

This study utilizes descriptive qualitative research, employing an ethnographic approach to data collection. This method aligns with the study's objective of elucidating multilingual practices in both rural and urban settings in Lombok. The urban setting selected is Mataram, the capital city of West Nusa Tenggara province, due to its more urbanized and modern facilities. In contrast, Pelangan village in the rural district of West Lombok, characterized by fewer modern public amenities, was chosen for rural investigation. This study specifically examines multilingual practices within the domains of education, casual conversation, and traditional gatherings. A random sampling technique is used to determine the population of this research. In the context of casual conversation, the researcher collected the data from car free day event in Mataram while teenagers hangout activity in Pelangan village. Within the case of traditional gatherings, the researcher observed traditional events such as “sorong-serah”, an activity before the wedding procession takes place. Finally educational domain, the researcher collected data from students at Bumigora University. After that, the researcher used recording techniques and note-taking to collect the data which would be analyzed thoroughly (Wei and Moyer, 2008). For data analysis, the researcher categorized the data sources by age, occupation, education, and gender to ensure accurate analysis (Fishman in Holmes, 1992).

FINDING AND DISCUSSION

Theoretically, people recognize SA and SJ are two different languages that possess their characteristics and functions. In terms of character, SA is a particular language that encourages a specific identity of a defined group of people. It seems only for people of Sasak aristocracy who are usually marked with the initial name *lahu* for men and *baiq* for women. They nurture this language among their relatives as one of their inherent social identities. Domain and interlocutors' identity eventually become the consideration of a multilingual speaker in choosing a particular language. According to Meyerhoff (2018:129), when code-switching is constrained based on where it takes place called situational-based. When code-switching is restricted by who the speaker is talking to, it is called addressee-based. So, these are the groups of factors that influenced the language choice of Sasak young people. Specifically, some people believe that the informal setting is associated with the domain of the SL, which could be SJ or SA. The matter of behavior, attitudes, and values act as the determiner of language use. Besides, the domains of religion, education, government, and work environment are considered to be the domain of formal language use, including the domain of Bahasa Indonesia as an official language. The pair between these domains and Bahasa Indonesia might be less concerning the traditional values, attitudes, and behavior of interlocutors in the community. Still, they are the product of language policy. According to Lo Bianco (2008), language policy and planning were introduced to overcome problems that relate to unifying diverse groups, educational or economic advancements, and maybe national security. For example, the use of Bahasa Indonesia as the only official language in the educational domain has been legitimated in the Indonesian constitution to prevent language barriers in the educational environment. So that the knowledge transformation will be much more comfortable, these different views toward the languages might be influenced by the diverse practices of multilingual speakers in rural and urban settings. In this case, each language has its function used by members of the community to express their will according to social norms in the language community concerned. To explain it more deeply, I will start discussing it separately as follows.

Multilingual practice in urban area

In the city of Mataram, SL is a dominant language that is spoken in the informal domain. It includes family and neighbors' conversations. The teenagers' (as the research object) language preferences are mostly influenced by social closeness, age, and topics. They will eventually choose SL to be spoken all the time if the relationship between interlocutors is close. For example, their contact with their classmates in which they spend much time together might result in a robust emotional connection among the classmates. In this case, what might be meant by the research participants is SJ, which is categorized as a type of SL that is far from formal and politeness contexts. However, The use of SA between two close friends is unusual. This phenomenon was consistently found in several conversations that occurred by some teenagers in a university setting in informal conversation. The use of the word "aoq" which means "yes" is the most frequent word that appears in the conversation. Instead of using "engguh" as the same meaning as aok in the SA version, the interlocutors choose to use "aok", the SJ form of the word yes. From this finding, we can explore more about the factors that influence their language choice. For instance, the use of SA might be more frequent in the family of royal descendants, while SJ might be more prevalent in the ordinary Sasak people.

Besides, most of the research participants believe that they tend to speak SL towards interlocutors of the same ages or under because they admitted to feeling equal, so they do not have to use formal or politeness language strategy in SA. Finally, the topic that they are speaking is also

playing a significant role in choosing a particular language. The issue that is related to scientific discussion or global information might require Bahasa Indonesia as the language used since some of the terms in science might not be found in the local language. It might lead the speaker to be more comfortable using Bahasa Indonesia in the scientific topic of discussion and use SL more casually. As a product of national language policy, the regulation forces them to use Bahasa Indonesia when communicating with teachers, school staff, and so on. This circumstance is also found in the work environment in which all employees should speak Bahasa Indonesia as the daily language. This is the implementation of the state and institutional rules.

Research that was conducted by Wahyuningsih (2016) attempted to observe the multilingual practice in the noble Sasak family in Mataram city. They found that only six families from 18 samples are commonly using SA in everyday communication among the family members. Most of the participants admit to using SJ in communicating with their family members. The rest chose Indonesian as their daily communication. It means that even in the noble family, SA is getting neglected. I guess, they only consider SA as the language of politeness not as an identity anymore. Considering a language as an identity means using SA as a whole. However, they only use a little lexical of SA just to show some respect to someone older than the speaker or someone new. The example of SA lexical that are commonly used by them is *tiang* (saya), *nggih* (yes), *pelinggih* (you), *napi* (what/how), *wikan* (know), *silaq* (please) and so on (Wahyuningsih, 2016:49). SA is not only threatened in the ordinary Sasak people but also many meritocrat families. As a result, the number of people who use SA is getting a decline every decade. On the other hand, traditional gatherings in Sasak culture, such as weddings, religious ceremonies, and community meetings, are vibrant showcases of multilingual practice that reflect the intricate social dynamics and cultural values of the Sasak people. These events typically feature a blend of languages, including different levels of the Sasak language and Bahasa Indonesia. This research found that Traditional gathering is the only domain where SA is dominantly used compared to SJ and Bahasa Indonesia. This is a long story of cultural reasons. However, the use of the traditional gathering (in this case *sorong-serah*) did not always occur in all wedding preparation stages. This event is frequently found in a meritocratic family which they think is the obligation before the wedding ceremonies. This finding is the same pattern that occurred in the rural setting.

Multilingual practice in rural setting

The research on the multilingual practice in a rural place such as Pelangan Village shows a similar result found by Wilian (2012). The use of research conducted in three different villages around the Western part of Lombok by Wilian (2012) found that many families have neglected SA. The survey questionnaire, a test of honorific vocabulary competence, and analysis of sentence construction reveal that 51,7% of respondents rarely used SA on many occasions, and only 12.6% of them always used the SA in the family domain. Finally, there are only 16.8% of the participants are using SA frequently in a specific field.

The above findings point to a severe problem in the language shift from the previous generations to the current generations. The younger the speakers, the weaker the SA language competence, which means the preservation of the SA is being threatened. Some people believe that the occurrence may be due to the social stereotype towards SA that the SA seems only for the royal meritocrat, so they do not feel necessary to preserve the SA. Besides, SA is a symbol of politeness in talking to older people, and religious and traditional leaders among the Sasak community. The dominance of Bahasa Indonesia reinforces the above stereotype as the language choice among the local government and traditional leaders. They tend to use Bahasa Indonesia even in regular gatherings, or some special occasions. It leads to a situation where SA is very

rarely heard in public spaces. The above phenomenon might yield limited use of SA in a rural setting. The number of noble descendants who are committed to preserving SA is not as many as ordinary Sasak people. I think this indicates that there is a potential for the extinction of SA, which is increasingly unpopular among Sasak young people. Although regional autonomy is promoted and allows the local curriculum to be taught, it does not significantly contribute to the sustainability of SA.

Moreover, students do not practice the SA in the school environment because of the dominance of Bahasa Indonesia and SJ. People are also claiming that the use of Bahasa Indonesia increases their confidence in front of people. They might be recognized as educated persons who possess high intellectual competency. This perspective is rooted in the use of Bahasa Indonesia in companies, public services, and other formal settings. Besides, the people who are working in those official places are civil servants who are respected by the Sasak people. Economically, their financial condition is relatively stable so their social status is automatically up. In this condition, people tend to use Bahasa Indonesia to label themselves as a part of formal workers to gain respect. While SJ is widely used in oppressive workplaces, such as farmers, unskilled laborers, and so on, these groups of people are seen as having low social status in Sasak communities, and they speak SJ in everyday communication. Therefore, many people in the Sasak community seem to attempt to raise their social class starting from their language choice.

CONCLUSION

The multilingual Sasak tribe is the original inhabitants of the island of Lombok. They speak Bahasa Indonesia as the official language and Sasak Language (SL) as the native tongue. The SL has two speech levels: Sasak Jamaq (SJ) for the lower level and Sasak Alus (SA) for the higher level. This offers a variety of choices for language use in everyday communication, whether it be in the context of traditional gatherings, informal conversations, or education. Over time, language choice has caused the Sasak people's language shift towards Sasak speech levels to gradually change. Along with social considerations, people's multilingual practice may differ from urban and rural settings in the Lombok region, which the author tries to discuss.

It turns out that the multilingual practice in the two settings (urban and rural) has the same pattern on how SA is becoming extinct. The massive neglect from both meritocratic families and non-royal descendants has triggered language endangerment. Moreover, the limited domain to be used as a medium of communication due to the intervention of language policy to put Bahasa Indonesia in many formal places, an educational system that no longer puts SA as a school subject. The SA could possibly experience extinction as a consequence of multilingual practice in Lombok. While SJ is still the most popular language among teenagers due to its casual characteristic, and nonformal use. Finally, the Indonesian is still taking control of many formal domains which is encouraged by the government policy. Finally, the language choice of the Sasak individuals is influenced by the domains. It includes where, who, what, and when to speak. The kind of topic is also affecting them to choose a particular language. For example, Indonesian is preferable if the topic is about global information or scientific discussions. The last one is the public perception of their identity, which includes their social status, wealth, and position among the communities.

Finally, this research opens up a new perspective on how the SL and Bahasa Indonesia are used in some specific domains which can lead to further research related to the investigation of the extent to which SA is being passed down to younger generations and identifying factors that influence this transmission. Additionally, geographical mapping of where SA is spoken and

identifying areas where the language is most and least vital could be another popping discussion circulating among linguists. Last but not least is how the role of local and national government policies in supporting or hindering language revitalization efforts.

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