ATTITUDES OF BIDAYUHS IN BAU DISTRICT TOWARDS
INTRODUCTION OF BIDAYUH LANGUAGE IN SCHOOLS

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Abstract

This study was carried out to determine the attitude of Bidayuhs towards introduction of Bidayuh language in schools. With the knowledge of their attitudes, then it will be easier to predict and regulate their behavior in support for their mother tongue to be introduced in schools, and making a positive step towards revitalizing and maintaining their heritage language. As such, this study aims to find out the attitudes of Bidayuhs in Bau district using four components of attitude: cognitive, affective, behavioral and integrative and instrumental orientation, and to find out if there is any differences in attitudes from different age and academic level. For this purpose, a total of 200 respondents from Bau district in Kuching, Sarawak which comprises of three groups according to their age are studied. The research design of this study is survey and questionnaires were distributed among the Bidayuhs in Bau in order to gain their attitude based on various components of attitude, namely cognitive, affective, behavioral and integrative and instrumental orientation. Findings from this study were analysed using SPSS Version 14 to discover significance difference in attitudes of the Bidayuhs. Generally, the Bidayuhs in Bau district are positive and in support towards the introduction of Bidayuh language in schools, regardless of age or academic status. There is also no significant difference in opinions according to the four components of attitudes, from different age and different academic level. As such, due to the positive attitudes and support from the community, the significance of introducing the Bidayuh language as a subject in schools should be considered seriously by policy makers to further enhance the racial identity among the people in the community.

Key words: Bidayuhs, attitude, language identity, cognitive, affective, behavioral, integrative and instrumental orientation, academic level.
Abstrak


Kata kunci: Bidayuh, sikap, bahasa sebagai lambang identiti, kognitif, afektif, tingkah laku, nilai kesepaduan dan instrumental, tahap akademik.
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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

1.0 Chapter overview

The contents of this chapter are the introduction to the study, the research problem, objectives of the study, research questions, research hypothesis, rationale of the study, conceptual framework, significance of the study, scope of the study, limitations of the study, as well as summary of the chapter.

1.1 Introduction

It will definitely be good if Bidayuhs has one common language. However, with the difference in dialects spoken in different district, it is quite impossible to identify the attitude of the Bidayuhs towards their own dialects and mother tongue, as well as their attitudes towards the other Bidayuh dialects. Adverse reactions and fear of offending other Bidayuh dialects from other district could be one of the stumbling blocks towards the introduction of Bidayuh language in schools. As a head start, this topic was chosen because it addressed the notion of what possible attitudes of Bidayuhs in Bau district could has towards the introduction of their mother tongue.

In this respect, this study will provide insights to the attitude of Bidayuhs towards the introduction of Bidayuh language in schools. Peter Minos (2000) stated that “members of the ethnic groups in Malaysia should enjoy their own language heritage, cultures and tradition” (pg 122). Therefore, the Bidayuh language could also be considered seriously to be implemented in school. Bidayuhs in Sarawak is the fourth largest racial groups after the Chinese, Malays and Ibans (Chang, 2002).
According to Gullick and Gale (1986), they postulates that “in those states in which ethnic, religious or linguistic minorities exist, persons belonging to such minorities shall not be denied the right, in community and with other members of their own group, to enjoy their own culture...or to use their own language” (p. 220).

Therefore, this study is carried out to determine the attitude of Bidayuh towards the introduction of Bidayuh Language in schools. With the knowledge of their attitudes, then it will be easier to predict their behavior and support towards the idea. McBroom and Reed (1992:2005) in Loji Roji (2004) agree that if attitudes are the causes of behavior, then the knowledge of attitudes will allow prediction of behavior (pg 134). As such, changing an attitude will allow one to study or control behavior and this will results in the positive attitude of Bidayuh communities’ in perpetuating and enriching their mother tongue over time. This study should also raise the awareness of the Bidayuhs to feel positive about their own language and keeping their mother tongue alive, enriched and survived over time. This knowledge of awareness will guide them in sitting down, to think and discuss before making any decision either to introduce the language in schools, or left to face a natural death.

According to G. Cantoni (1996), languages are in trouble because only ten percent of the world’s total languages can be reasonably classified as “safe”. If nothing is done, these languages and their cultures will die. With the death of the ethnic or minority group language, our knowledge and understanding of knowledge and human thought and will be lost. Languages will die gradually as a result of the communicative practices of the community where the speakers themselves can be considered as victims, as they themselves have adapted to change. In Bau district for example, Bidayuhs’ generation are exposed to other languages such as Bahasa Melayu and English in schools. They also use Bahasa Melayu and Dialek Melayu Sarawak in communication with other ethnic groups either in their daily communication and conversation.
1.2 Statement of the problem

There is a need to identify the attitudes of Bidayuhs towards introduction of Bidayuh language in schools. According to Minos (2000), “Bidayuh children are increasingly using Malay and English language in schools, and as such posing a threat to their own language” (p.121). Therefore, it is better for Bidayuhs to know their attitude so that they can regulate their behavior in support for their mother tongue to be introduced in schools, and making a positive step towards revitalizing and maintaining their heritage language. Accordingly, the problem in the different Bidayuh dialects spoken by the Bidayuhs is also common. As Bidayuhs communicate and speak in four different major dialects, it often affects the difficulty in communicating and getting socially united. As such, there is a need to identify their attitude towards their own language in their own district as well as the other dialects to reveal whether the introduction of Bidayuh language as a subject in schools can be materialized or not. In a nutshell, this study is essential be carried out in order to identify Bidayuhs’ attitude and interest towards the introduction of their mother tongue in Bau district and their attitudes towards other dialects.

1.3 Objectives of the study

The study will be carried out to achieve these objectives based on the research problem. As such, by the end of this study, the researcher hopes;

- to find out the attitudes of Bidayuhs in Bau district towards the introduction of Bidayuh language as a subject in school using the four major components of attitude, namely cognitive, affective, behavioral as well as integrative and instrumental orientation;
- to find out if there are any differences in attitudes of Bidayuhs in Bau district towards the introduction of Bidayuh Language in schools from different age level;
to find out if there are any differences in attitudes of Bidayuhs in Bau district towards the introduction of Bidayuh Language in schools from different academic level. These research objectives are formulated based on the statement by Peter Minos (2000) that states "as far as the aged and educated Bidayuhs are concerned, they do not seem very conscious regarding the importance of the Bidayuh language to be kept alive" (pg 148).

1.4 Research questions

The research questions are formulated to determine the outcome of this study. Therefore, based on the objectives of the study, these are the research questions for this study namely: (i) What are the attitudes of Bidayuhs in Bau district towards introduction of Bidayuh language in school by using the four components of attitude, i.e. cognitive, affective, behavioral, integrative and instrumental orientation?, (ii) Are there any differences of attitudes of Bidayuhs towards the introduction of Bidayuh Language in schools from different age level? and (iii) Are there any differences of attitudes of Bidayuhs towards the introduction of Bidayuh language in schools from different academic level?

1.5 Significance of the study

Findings of the study is hoped to contribute to the empirical data of the Bidayuhs' attitude towards their own language. Besides that, this study hopes to portray the main attitudes of Bidayuhs that there may exist a desire from the community in Bau to uphold and enrich their language to last forever. It is also the hope of this study to suggest the attitudes of the Bidayuhs from the perspective of the community on one common understanding and equally agreeable to the statement provided in the study. This is because language is a vital part of the Bidayuhs' racial identity, and as such a part of their racial pride and dignity to stand proud among other ethnic groups in Sarawak. This is further mentioned by Bedlington (1978), that postulates the value system or a set of referent can help to define an ethnic or cultural organism (cited in
Loji Roji, 2004). In addition, Peter Minos (2000) states that “Bidayuhs' attitudes towards their mother tongue are instrumental in ensuring whether their dialects will survive the test of time” (pg 127). Hence, the adaptation and change of Bidayuhs’ attitude is a way or another of promoting Bidayuh Language in the classroom in the future.

The Bidayuh community in general, regardless of age or academic level should also be aware of his/her attitudes in the language because their attitudes and the survival of Bidayuh language are interrelated. Real and genuine interest over their mother tongue is sure to keep the language well intact and not deliberately suppressed or downgraded. Hence, the knowledge of attitude is an advantage for the Bidayuhs to promote Bidayuh language. Moreover, the policy maker and curriculum planners can utilize the knowledge of the attitude of Bidayuh towards introduction of Bidayuh Language in designing and developing suitable courses to be applied in future Bidayuhs curriculum development programs should it materialized.

Essentially, this study assumed that the attitude or interest of the Bidayuhs community, affects the policy makers and planners on the issue and ambitions of Bidayuhs community to achieve the goal of sustaining Bidayuh language.

1.6 Scope of the study

The researcher proposed to carry out this study in Bau district in Kuching, Sarawak only. Therefore, it does not represent the other Bidayuh community from other areas or dialects in Sarawak. This study will comprise three groups of Bidayuhs in Bau district grouped according to their age, i.e. 1st group – age ranging from 40 – 60 years old, 2nd group – age ranging from 25 – 35 years old and the 3rd group – age ranging from 15 – 20 years old. As such, this study does not take into account those below 15 years of age. In addition, the researcher proposed to study the viewpoints of Bidayuh professional such as teachers, lawyers, engineers and administrative officers, while non-professional are such as laborers, government support staffs and support groups working in either government of private sectors in Bau districts only.
As such, this study does not take into account the villagers’ point of view or kampung folks who are not working.

1.7 Conceptual & operational definition of terms

The definitions of terms used in this study:

1.7.1 The Bidayuhs:

Bidayuh is one of the ethnic racial groups in Sarawak. According to the official figures from the Monthly Statistical Bulletin in Sarawak on December 1999, there were 164,500 Bidayuhs in Sarawak (cited in Minos, 2000:4) making them the fourth largest community in the state. They lives in the four major district in Sarawak, namely Lundu, Bau, Kuching and Serian. For communication among themselves, they speak in four different dialects according to their geographical location. For example, those in Lundu district talk in the Salako-Lara dialect, those in the Bau district in the Bau-Jagoi dialect, those in the Kuching district in the Biatah dialect while those in Serian district in the Bukar-Sadong district. Some dialectal group does know and understand, and some even can speak other dialects due to close proximity and social interaction.

For the purpose of this study, the Bidayuh in Bau live in seven settlements, namely Gunung Bratak @ Tembawang Sauh, Gunung Serembu, Gunung Jagoi, Gunung Krokong, Gunung Singai, Gumbang Settlement and Tringgus Settelement. According to Minos (2000), even though Bidayuhs in Bau is considered to fall under the Bau-Jagoi dialects, this dialect is further divided into sub-dialects. For example, it has the sub dialects of Jagoi-Bratak, Singai, Serumbu or Broih and Krokong-Tringgus (pg 122).
1.7.2 Attitude:

Baker (1995) defined attitude as “a latent or non-observable complex but relatively stable behavioral disposition reflecting both direction and intensity of feeling towards a particular object whether it be abstract or concrete” (pg 78). This definition assumed that attitude is a complex word having both direction and intensity. Thomas (1971) as cited in Roji (2004) perceived attitude as “a complex of feelings, desires, fears, convictions, prejudices, or other tendencies that have given a set of readiness to act because of varied experience”. This definition revealed that experience is a factor in attitude formation.

Attitude also refers to “a hypothetical construct used to explain the direction and persistence of human behaviour” (Baker, 1992:10). So, it represents internal thoughts, feelings and tendencies in behaviour across a variety of contexts. In this study, it is looking at the behavioural position reflecting intensity of feeling towards a particular topic, which is the Bidayuh language. Based on these definitions, Bidayuhs' attitude can be defined as the Bidayuhs' opinions, interest, feeling and curiosity and how it is reflected towards the introduction of Bidayuh language in schools using the four components of attitude namely, cognitive, affective, behavioral and integrative and instrumental orientation.

1.8 Chapter review

Language plays an undeniably important and significance roles in communication and in the education system. It is the language as a tool to impart knowledge and the source of racial identity and dignity. This chapter discussed the research problem of the study and the importance of the Bidayuh community to sustain their mother tongue or their language may fade away and face natural death. This study is important to identify Bidayuhs' main attitude towards the introduction of their language in schools which can greatly influence the decision in proposing the language to a higher authority. To narrow down the Bidayuhs main attitude in the
introduction of the language, three groups of age are chosen to investigate if there are any significance attitudes of Bidayuhs in accordance of the research objective. The difference of attitude in terms of their age and academic level of Bidayuhs in Bau district will also be collected in this study. Consequently, the next chapter will discuss on the studies that are related to origin and history of language development, further discussion on the four major dialects of Bidayuhs in Sarawak, explanations for the choosing of the age groups, Bidayuhs' attitude and characteristics in terms of definitions and categories as well as studies that are related to attitude of other ethnic group in Malaysia as well as the world to sought further insights into the study.
CHAPTER 2
Literature review

2.0 Chapter overview

Language is a powerful symbol of a group’s identity. Much of the cultural, spiritual and intellectual life of people is experienced through language. This ranges from prayers, myths, ceremonies, folktales and vocabulary to everyday greetings, conversations, ways of speaking to children and the elderly and many more. In short, language is creative – it allows novelty and innovation in response to new thoughts, experiences and situations. Nevertheless, many languages are falling out of use and being replaced by others that are more widely used in the regions or the nation, such as Bahasa Malaysia in Malaysia. Many other languages are no longer being learned by new generation (Amin Mulia, 2003) and as such, these languages will become extinct when their last speaker dies. Therefore, a community or ethnic of a nation can avoid the language to become extinct by taking specific programmes.

In this chapter, there are several key points to the scenario that a community or ethnic will face in their language such as language death and language loss, language revitalization and language maintenance as well as interconnectedness of how language impact upon one’s identity. The contents of this chapter are background information of the language death and language loss, language revitalization and maintenance as review of related literature regarding this topic, and all these topics are catered to probe further into the research hypothesis in this study.
2.1 Language attitude, language shift and language death

People who speak more than one language are often to be said having the cognitive advantages compared to others who only speak few languages. However, as a result of economic and cultural globalization, the loss of indigenous languages and cultures are inevitable. According to Cantoni (1996), “languages are in trouble if the losses of the indigenous language are not revitalized” (pg 47). Therefore, if nothing is done, these languages and their culture will die. With the death of the ethnic or minority group language, our knowledge and understanding of knowledge and human thought will be lost. Languages will die gradually as a result of the communicative practices of the community where the speakers themselves can be considered as victims, as they themselves have adapted to change. In Bau district for example, Bidayuhs generation are exposed to other languages such as learning Bahasa Melayu and English language in schools. They also use Bahasa Melayu in communication with other ethnic groups either in daily communication and conversation. As such, we just cannot encourage them to maintain their ancestral languages even if only as home varieties without providing consequences of such actions.

Language shift on the other hand is a result from a complex of internal and external pressures that induce a speech community to adopt a language spoken by others. These may include changes in values, rituals, or economic and political life resulting from trade, migration, intermarriage, religious conversion, or military conquest. Some describe these as "changes in the ecology of languages" (Wurm, 1991, pg 135). This is because competence in the language gradually erodes over time and does not disappear overnight (Holmes, 1992, pg 68). The spread of a majority group language into more and more domains has resulted in the diminishing number of contexts in which individuals use the ethnic language. For instance, Holmes (1992) mentioned that “many Maori communities in New Zealand is entirely dependent on the availability of elders who still retain some knowledge of the ethnic language and is used only in certain formal ceremonies or prayers” (pg 65).
Another instance where language shift has taken great effect on the ethnic minority is in Indonesia. According to Peter Minos (2000), “the government of Indonesia has overpushed the Bahasa Indonesia totally at the expense of other ethnic minority language and dialects to the extent that the Bidayuhs in Indonesia are very proficient in Bahasa Indonesia but cannot speak their mother tongue that is Bidayuh language” (pg. 127)

However, language shift tends to be slower if the minority language is highly valued by the community themselves. This is because if the language is seen as an important symbol of ethnic identity, it is generally maintained longer (Minos, 2000). In this study, the researcher hopes to identify the attitudes of the Bidayuh community towards their own language. This is because positive attitudes from the ethnic community themselves will definitely support effort to use the minority language as stated below:

“So it does look that the Bidayuh’s own attitude towards their dialects and language as well as the attitude of the Government are instrumental in seeing whether such dialects and language will or will not survive the test of time. If the attitude of the people and the government are positive, the dialects and language will survive. If not, they may possibly fade away as what happened in Indonesia” (pg. 127).

Minos (2000) further mentioned that “interaction with other racial groups, the introduction of Bahasa Malaysia and English has causes the language shift from their own mother tongue to these languages” (pg. 127)

2.2 Language attitude, language revitalization and maintenance

To ensure that language remains the ‘strength’ of ethnic minorities, their languages must often be further developed or revitalised – saved from extinction. This is important because language express identity and it contribute to the sum of human knowledge, and because languages are interesting in themselves (Yule, 1985). According to Hoffman (1991), in Kuncha and Bathula, language maintenance refers to a situation where members of the community try to keep the language (s) they
have and always used it (page 186). Language maintenance is crucial for its survival. Moreover, in order to maintain the language, one must have the knowledge of the attitude of the community. This is further supported by this statement that one of the most important factors that has impact on shift and maintenance of language is attitude (Gardner, 1985; Holmes and Harlow, 1991).

2.3 Review of related literature

A review of literature shows that there have been a few research studies conducted locally in the Malaysian context on attitudes towards language and identity. Asmah Haji Omar’s (1991) study on a group of bilingual non-Malay academics, which comprised mostly Chinese and Indians at a local Malaysian university, found that the primary language of these two ethnic groups usually does not play the role of giving a label to the ethnic group. Most of the subjects responded that they were using the language they were educated in, which was English, as they had been educated in English medium schools. However, there was a gradual trend towards reversing the language shift when it came to their children. Several Chinese and Tamil subjects responded that they were ensuring that their children learn their mother tongues through private tuition, indicating a revival of pride and interest in their ethnic and cultural identity. Asmah states that this can be interpreted as a conscious rebirth of their ethnic heritage (Asmah H. Omar, 1991).

In another study, Asmah H. Omar (1998) set out to investigate the correlation between linguistic identity, an individual’s ethnic heritage, and the place of linguistic identity in the individual as a member of a group or groups. Data collection comprised interviews with 12 respondents from 3 ethnic groups (Malays, Chinese and Indians) and a questionnaire survey of 83 university students. The findings showed that linguistic identity in the individual is not inborn and not a fixture but “changes with the individual’s development, environment and situations of language use” (1998, pg 21). As a result, an individual has multiple linguistic identities which are projected with various degrees of strength.
Asmah (1998) states that all in all, identity building comes with nurturing. It is a result of comparing and contrasting, and does not find a breeding ground in homogeneity.

For the Malays, the Malay language seems to have language, and the fact that speakers use the Malay language as the national language, and as the medium of instruction in their school education. For minority groups, movement away from the original linguistic group is not always towards the majority group. There is a preference for the language which has a higher prestige in the context of the wider world as seen in the movement towards English. Another factor that Asmah cites to explain the defection towards English is its perceived neutrality. Unlike the vernacular languages, English does not possess a first-language speech community in Malaysia; hence movement towards the language means a membership without other cultural constraints (1998).

A recent doctoral research study by Lee, Su Kim (2001, 2003) set out to investigate the impact of the English language on the construction of the socio cultural identities of a selected group of ESL learners in Malaysia. Using a qualitative research approach, fourteen Malaysian participants were interviewed using critical ethnography research methods (Carspecken, 1997), personal narratives and a questionnaire. The findings reveal that in a multicultural, post-colonial society like Malaysia, identity issues are complex and multi-layered. Identity shifts take place frequently in strategic and non-strategic ways, and identity constructions of the participants are heavily dependent on the localized contexts.

The participants possess a range of diverse identities depending on the contexts and the reference groups they are interacting with, and have to subtly manage the complexities of their multiple identities in order to fit in or belong to the group they were interacting with. The findings revealed that within certain contexts, it is the non-use rather than the use of the English language that enhances conformity and acceptance.
Using the English language within certain contexts where there is resentment towards the English language may bring about hostility, marginalization and even alienation. Therefore, in relation to this study, it is hope that how the Bidayuh language can affect the acquisition of knowledge and how the community views the language.

2.5 Summary

In a nutshell, this chapter discussed how language death and language loss will gave impact on an ethnic minority language if the Bidayuhs' wants their language to last. It is most desirable to find out the attitude and desire of the Bidayuh towards the introduction of the language in the context of students learning the Bidayuh language as a subject in schools. Further, it is also argued that "attitude" is the key to protect and perpetuate language, and as such the next chapter will seek to reveal the attitude of the Bidayuh community. As mentioned earlier that both languages and identity are dynamic, bemoaning the death of the language alone will not do the job. Consequently, the next chapter will deals with the methodology used in this study. It will also includes the research design and data collection instruments, subjects of the study/sampling, questionnaire procedures and framework, pilot test, data collection procedure, data analysis and limitation of the study.
CHAPTER 3
Research Design

3.0 Chapter overview

The contents of this chapter are the methodology used in this study. It includes the research design and data collection instruments, subjects of the study/sampling, questionnaire procedures and framework, pilot test, data collection procedure, data analysis and limitation of the study.

3.1 Research Design and Data Collection Instruments

According to Loji (2004) a research design may be described as a plan or programme that guides the researcher in the process of collecting, analyzing as well as interpreting empirical data and observations. In this process, a researcher can think of the best way in which the investigation is carried out, and then the most appropriate method for data collection and analysis. However, the major concern in any research conducted is to devise the most appropriate and accurate research design to achieve the targeted objective.

The research design of this study is survey. The instrument for data collection is questionnaire, an attempt was made to identify the attitude of the Bidayuhs' community in a variety of components that consists of beliefs, feelings and thought in regards to their own language, i.e. Bidayuh language. The components will be based on four components, based on cognitive, affective, behavioral and integrative and instrumental orientation. The design is selected because it is able to present a
distinguishable result to show whether there is a relation between the Bidayuh community’s attitudes towards introduction of their mother tongue in schools. Hence, in this study, a questionnaire can provide information of the two components in terms what determining the attitude how these attitudes will give an impact on the implementing of the language in the national syllabus.

The questionnaire will be constructed based on the primary objective of the study that is to find out the attitudes of Bidayuh in Bau district towards the introduction of Bidayuh language as a subject in schools. The questionnaire will also find out the attitudes of Bidayuh towards their own language and to determine if there are any significant differences from the age and academic level of the respondents. Thus, the questionnaire will consist of five sections; first section is to determine the demographic information of the respondents, second section for measuring the cognitive component of attitude, third section will determine the affective component of attitude, while fourth section to measure the behavioral component of attitude and finally the fifth section to determine the integrative and instrumental orientation. The first section consists of the demographical aspect where participants are required to fill in information about themselves, for example their age, academic qualifications and their profession as well as other general information about the respondents.

The following and the subsequent section will require the respondents to indicate how their general attitude towards the introduction of the language as a subject in schools using the four components of attitude, namely cognitive, affective, behavioral and integrative and instrumental orientation. With the questions probed in the questionnaire, the respondents will be required to gauge their attitude and are asked to indicate their overall attitude. From these statements, the researcher is able to measure the general attitudes of the respondents with the idea of attitudes towards the language in general. This section will also require the respondents to indicate how important the Bidayuh language is to them as individuals. This is because, from the information gained from the data, a researcher is able to identify the respondents’ perceived attitudes towards the language with respect to themselves.