THE LANGUAGE USE OF BIDAYUH FAMILIES IN KAMPUNG SIRA, PADAWAN: A CASE STUDY.

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THE LANGUAGE USE OF BIDAYUH FAMILIES IN KAMPUNG SIRA, PADAWAN: A CASE STUDY

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This project is submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a Bachelor of Education with Honours (TESL)

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Statement of Originality

The work described in this Final Year Project, entitled “The Language Use of Bidayuh Families in Kampung Sira, Padawan: A Case Study” is to the best of the author’s knowledge that of the author except where due reference is made.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

B.Ed  Bachelor in Education
BM    Bahasa Melayu/Malaysia
Dr.   Doctor
MP3   Media Player 3
TESL  Teaching English as a Second Language
ABSTRACT

THE LANGUAGE USE OF BIDAYUH FAMILIES IN KAMPUNG SIRA, PADAWAN: A CASE STUDY

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The purpose of this study was to find out the common language used by the families in Kampung Sira, Padawan. It was also aim to see whether there is a shift in the use of language in the kampung. The participants in this study are three Bidayuh families in which the families having intra-ethnic marriages. This study used interview and observation data collection method. Findings in this study showed that the common language being used by the families are Bidayuh Pinyawa’ and Bahasa Melayu. The shift in language use did happened. It was also found out that there are three main reasons influencing the language use of the participants which were demographic factor, familiarity and ethnicity. Eventhough the younger generation in the families do not speak Bidayuh, it is discovered that their positive attitude towards their native language is still intact.
ABSTRAK

PENGGUNAAN BAHASA KELUARGA BIDAYUH DI KAMPUNG SIRA, PADAWAN: SATU KAJIAN KES

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

1.0 Overview
This chapter will focus on the background of the research, the research problems, the aim and objectives of the study, significance of the study, definitions of terms and scope of the study.

1.1 Background
The Bidayuh or Land Dayak is one of the major ethnics that live in Sarawak. The Bidayuh can be found mostly in the first division in Sarawak which is Kuching, and Kota Samarahan division. It consists of the district of Kuching, Serian, Bau and Lundu which is called the Bidayuh Belt. (Bidayuh’s Educationalist and Intellectual, n.d.) The Bidayuh speaks Bidayuh language. The Bidayuh language can be divided into four distinct dialects which are Jagoi, Biatah, Bukar-Sadong and Selako-Rara. Even so, the Selako-Rara only regarded as one of the Bidayuh groups in 1970’s because of the political reasons. (Chang, 2002). There are also other minor dialects or isolects of Bidayuh language which are Bipuru, Pinyawa, Bibenuk, Bisitang, Semban, Braang, Bisimpok, Biannah, Bibengoh and Tibiah.
The Bidayuh language is not only used as the everyday language of the Bidayuh in the village, but it is also used in other domain such as religious domain. This is evident through the use of Bidayuh language during prayer service, in prayer books, religious magazines and Bible. There were prayer books and hymns in a few dialects of Bidayuh written by the missionaries to promote Christianity among the Bidayuh in the olden days. (Bidayuh’s Educationalist and Intellectual, n.d.)

Living in a multicultural country, the Bidayuh is also exposed to other languages. This is happening through the education system that adopted the Malay language as medium of instruction and official language. The use of Malay language is very important as the instrument to encourage and instill solidarity among the multiethnic community in Malaysia. Therefore, the Bidayuh has to accept and adjust themselves to the new language. Before Sarawak joined the Malaysian Federation, the Bidayuh already exposed to the English language through the education given by the missionaries. English is used as the medium of instruction in schools. However, during the time, Bidayuh language is taught as ‘vernacular’ language. Now, the Bidayuh language study is no longer available in school. (Bidayuh’s Educationalist and Intellectual, n.d.)

Besides education, the migration of the Bidayuh to urban centres has exposed the Bidayuh to other languages. This happens when the Bidayuh who work in the city mix with other races and learn or acquire their friends’ languages. This scenario makes the Bidayuh is capable of more than one language. Usually, the younger generation is the dominant group that will migrate to the city. Exposure to the other language among the Bidayuh also occur when there is a mix marriage between the Bidayuh and people from other ethnic or race.
1.2 Statement of the problem

The language of a particular speech group is very important. A language is not only a medium of communication, but also the source of identification for an individual or group of people. A person’s language can reflect the richness of their heritage and culture. The lost of a language can be a great loss to a particular community and that may affect the culture and heritage of a particular ethnic.

In the case of the Bidayuh, it is found that nowadays the Bidayuh rarely speak their native language. This situation is alarming as it signifies the loss of the important heritage and identification of the Bidayuh. This is true as the once Mambong Member of Parliament, Dr James Dawos Mamit said the Bidayuh language is dying out. (The Star Online, 2003) There are a few reasons that contributed to the situation. One of the factors is mix marriage. According to Dr James Dawos Mamit in The Star Online, (2003) the next generation whose the product of mix parentage will not be able to speak Bidayuh as they prefer to speak Malay or English language. The decline of Bidayuh language use also happen when intra dialectal marriage happen. For example when a man from Bau marries with a lady from Serian which use different dialect, their children may end up using Malay or English language to accommodate the communication. (Bidayuh’s Educationalist and Intellectual, n.d.)

Another reason of not using the Bidayuh language is the migration of the younger generation to the city. This Bidayuh in this group of age who live in cities or towns will prefer to speak Malay or English. (Bidayuh dotcom, 2000)

Besides that, the level of education that someone gets will also influence the language that someone will be using. The educated will pick up a language, for example, English during one’s study period. He or she may regard the language as having high prestige and may forget their mother tongue. Besides that, the frequent use of the language during study will influence one to use it outside the study circle, even with
the family. This happens when someone gets married and uses it with their children or spouse. The language that the Bidayuh parents are using with their children depends on the medium of instruction that they were using at school during their time. When the parents are English educated, they may speak English at home with their children and vice versa if they are from the Bahasa Melayu medium of instruction. (Bidayuh’s Educationalist and Intellectual, n.d.)

It is well known that the choice of language in town areas change from Bidayuh to Malay language, indicating a shift in language use. However, whether this is true in village or kampong area, is still uncertain. Therefore, this study aims to see how far the use of Bidayuh language in the village is, is there any changes in Kampung Sira in terms of language use and does these reasons (mentioned above) related with the situation of language use in the rural area.

1.3 Research objectives
The objectives of this research are:
1. To identify the language or languages used by different generation of speakers in the village.
2. To find out the reasons of using the language or languages.
3. To find out the attitude of the speakers towards their native language.

1.4 Research questions
This study will be guided by these research questions which are:
1. What is (are) the language(s) used by different generation of speakers in the village?
2. What are the reasons of using the language or languages?
3. How is the attitude of the speakers towards their native language?
1.5 Significance of the study
Since this study is focused on the Bidayuh ethnic, it is hoped that this research would become the eye opener for the Bidayuh community that their language is important that they need to preserve it by using it. This is because through times, language can be lost if it is not used. This is to make sure that the very important aspect of one’s heritage will not disappear in waste.

Besides that, there is rarely research focusing on the local setting in Malaysia, especially in the rural area in Sarawak. Therefore, this study is conducted to give a new and fresh perspective on looking on the language use. This will also open the issue in language use that may be not known or discussed before.

Following this, it is also hoped that this study will be the foundation for other researchers that interested in doing further research. This study as well is hoped to add on the current and previous research by giving new findings and information.

1.6 Operational definition of terms
Throughout this study, some operational terms will be used as below:

1.6.1 Language use
Language use is the use of a particular language or languages by someone in order to communicate with other people. The use of a language always resulted from the choice of language made by a particular community which resulted from the language which is dominantly used.

1.6.2 Bidayuh
The Bidayuh is also called the Land Dayaks. They are called so because of their settlement in inland area and far from the coastal area. The Bidayuh mostly settle on
mountainous area and highland. They are mostly found in the capital of Sarawak which is Kuching.

1.6.3 Language attitude
Language attitude is one’s attitude towards a particular language or his native language. Language attitude is determined by one’s language use and language choice. It is also influenced by one’s ethnicity.

1.6.4 Language choice
Language choice is someone’s choice of language. It is the language that one chooses to use when talking with other people. Language choice is different from language use as it is a conscious action and done on purpose. In this study, the choice of language refers to the language that the speakers choose to use with the family members.

1.6.5 Native language
Native language is the language that one’s first use at home since one was small. It is influenced by one’s parents’ use of language. (Lectric Law Library, n.d) Native language can also be said one’s mother tongue. Native language also linked to one’s ethnicity. The ethnicity of someone will usually determine what language he will use.

1.6.6 Ethnicity
Ethnicity is related to one’s geography or cultural root, shared history, and sense of identity. (About.com, 2008)

1.7 Scope of study
This study will cover the language use which is interrelated with language choice, language attitude and code-switching. However, this study will not involve language shift. The setting of this study is in Kampung Sira which is located at Padawan, the
sub-district in Kuching only. Three families from different background will be involved in this study and at least one family with three generations and one family with the first generation still alive. The participants will specifically involve family members who are staying in Kampung Sira only and not in other villages or places. The participants for this study involve the intra-marriages family only which means marriages among Bidayuhs but from different dialects. It will not cover on inter-marriages or known as mix marriages which means marriages from different ethnicity. Some of the families may be bilinguals.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Preview
This chapter will review the literature on language use, language choice, language and ethnicity, related studies in language use and issues of language use in Bidayuh community.

2.1 Language use
When talking about language use, one simple and common question that we often ask is “what is the language that someone uses to talk with other person?” Simply put, it is what language someone speaks in. Addressing this statement, the language that someone speaks in is the dominant language that he uses to communicate. When talking about this, we cannot avoid to think of the reasons that make a person use a certain language. The common reason that one may think of the language a person use is the person’s ethnicity. A person’s ethnicity is the easiest and explicit indicator of one’s use of language. For example, if a Chinese cashier in a shop sees a Chinese customer in front of her, she will automatically thinks that the customer speaks in Chinese and started to speak Chinese with the customer. On the other hand, Holmes
(1992) states that a language that one chooses to use will signal his ethnicity. This is of course, quite confusing. However, one can easily understand in layman understanding that ethnicity can be the signal to what language a person use through the physical appearance of a person eventhough it is not necessarily correct all the time. For instance if someone sees a person with white skin and small eyes and he recognizes the person as a Chinese, his assumption might not be true but at least he make a first impression in order to know what language that person uses. In another perspective, however, ethnicity should not be the best benchmark to recognize one’s use of language. A person may be a Chinese, Indian, or Malay, but that does not necessarily reflect the language that he uses. As mentioned before, the language that one uses refers to the dominant language that one uses. In determining this dominancy, a few elements should be taken into consideration. These elements are proficiency, familiarity, comfortability and frequency of using the language. Of course, when someone is familiar and comfortable in using a certain language, he will be using it frequently and confident in using it. It is acceptable too when someone is proficient in a certain language, he will use it frequently and confidently. Thus, it will show that the language that a person uses proficiently and frequently is the dominant language that someone uses. In order to know how these elements develop we need to look at the native language of an individual which will determine his language use

2.1.1 Native language

“To talk about native and non-native speakers is to possess an assumption (or assumptions) about natives and non-natives per se. The terms themselves are perhaps unfortunate in a discussion of language, since the word "native", as its etymology suggests, implies birth into a specific community, or in a particular place, the two usually being regarded as identical. In fact, cases where being born in a particular place automatically entails membership of a specific community and knowledge of a particular language may well be the exception rather than the norm.” (Turner, 2004).
Therefore, native language is the language that someone use since he was small from the home.

2.2 Language choice

Most people can speak one language. However, some people can speak more than one language or even three languages. As Buda (2006) says “Although most of the world's population can speak only one language, a sizeable minority is able to communicate in two or more. Of the world's 750 million speakers of English, for example, only 300 million use it as their first or native tongue. The remaining 450 million speak it as a second or third language.” In a multicultural country, this phenomenon can easily be seen though not necessarily all can speak more than one language. (Buda, 2006) In a speech community where the speakers can speak more than one language, a decision needs to be made on what language to be used. The reasons behind what language or code to be used are varied according to the speech community or a group of people who are talking. When a language is chosen to be the medium of communication for a person or a speech community, the language will become the one that the person or speech community uses. This is the point that tells how a particular code or language, once chosen will be the language use of an individual or group of people. For example in a multicultural country like Malaysia where there are Chinese, Malay, Indians and other races come together, they will use one language which is the Malay language as a medium of communication. This is because they need to have a particular language that most people know and easy to understand to facilitate the communication. Therefore, the Malay language that they chose becomes the language that they use at the particular time of conversation though the language is not necessarily use all the time.

Another example of situation on where choice on language has to be made is in a family of mix marriage. When a person who is married to someone who is not from his or her ethnic, both of them should pick a language that will assist in their
communication. The language that they use may the language of the husband, the wife or even not both. The language that the couple chooses may be a neutral language. For example in case of the German and American couple who get married, the couple uses English as their medium of communication.

2.3 Language and ethnicity

In a study by Gudykunst and Ting-Toomey (1990), it is stated by DeVos (1975) that the ‘ethnic identity of a group of people consists of their subjective symbolic or emblematic use of any aspect of culture, in order to differentiate themselves from other groups’ (p.16). Counter to that, Giles and Johnson (1981) suggested that an ethnic group includes ‘those individuals who identify themselves as belonging to the same ethnic category’ (p. 202). As a summary to that, Paulston and Paulston (1980) as cited in Giles and Ting-Toomey (1990) mentioned that the emphasis of their conceptualization is to portray and maintain ethnic group boundaries which is necessary for self-conscious ethnic identity. Other than that, ethnicity also defines as “a value and a form of identity marker of which each member of that particular group is proud to have” (Stephen, 2000, p.11). “Ethnicity is a sense of ethnic identity (Brass, 1996, as cited in Stephen, 2000) and the value that the ethnic community puts upon aspects such as matters of descent, birth and a sense of kinship as methods for inclusion and exclusion from the group shows how very much significant it is the identity of being known as coming from such and such ethnic group.” (Stephen, 2000, p.11)

How can ethnicity be linked with language? Holmes (1992) states that “many ethnic groups use a distinctive language associated with their ethnic identity” and “Where a choice of language is available for communication, it is often possible for an individual to signal their ethnicity by the language they choose to use.” Based on what Holmes stated it can be understood that the language that we use can be the indicator of which ethnicity we come from. It is easier to differentiate among
ourselves into what ethnicity we belong to just by detecting the language that we use because each language that a person or particular group of people is unique in their own being.

2.4 Research on language use

There are a few studies related to language use. A study conducted in Mauritius by Carrim (2005) examined the language use of the people in Mauritius based on the 2000 consensus. It also examined the attitude of the citizens of Mauritian towards the language that they used. The participants for this study were the head of the household. A set of questionnaire is used to gather the data from the participants. From the findings it is found that Most Mauritians and non-creoles such as Sino-Mauritians and Franco-Mauritians claimed creole as their ancestral language rather than creole themselves. The presence of Arabic is unexpected because none of the Muslims in Mauritius are of Arab origin. Yet, 798 Mauritians claim that Arabic is their ancestral language for security related to religious issues. It is also found that Creole not necessarily the language that is mostly used at home because Mauritians who claimed creole as the ancestral language speaks their own ethnic language or other language such as English. This shows that creole acts as a national language.

In another research conducted locally in Malaysia, which is in the state of Sarawak, the study on language use of the Kelabit in urban centres was done. This research was done by Martin and Yen (1992). The participants for this study were the Kelabit people in urban centers. Questionnaire and observation was employed in order to get the data for this study. From the study, language shift is seen among Kelabit where there is relatively low percentage transmission of Kelabit to their offsprings. Most of the Kelabit use English to speak with their children. It is discovered also that the children of the Kelabit are more proficient in English rather than Kelabit.